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1021.

Although the cost is apparently a good one,
all the Princes in Act I can double with the Jews
in Acts II and III.

ACT I.

SCENE: The Banqueting Hall in the Palace of Shushan. Ahasuerus, the King, is sitting on a throne which is on a dais at the head of the table. By his right hand is another throne-chair in which no one sits. Behind him stands a Scribe with tablets and a stylus. At tables stretching over the stage are seated the Princes, all of whom are discovered at the rising of the curtain which goes up amid a babel of laughter, following a trumpet blast. A kneeling cupbearer presents a goblet to Ahasuerus who rises and takes it.

- Ahasu. (Holding up goblet) Let each man drink according to his will. No one is compelled. (Raises goblet. He drinks)
- Officer The King drinks. (Blare of trumpets)
- All The King drinks. (They all drink. The Teller and Scribe prostrate themselves as do the slaves and courtiers. Ahasuerus sits down)
- Ahasu. Be seated. (They all sit)
- Memucan By Mithra, but the wine is good. There is only one thing better in Persia, a woman's kiss.
- Carshana That's poisoned wine which the wise refuse to drink.
- Memucan That wisdom comes only with gray hairs. I thank Mithra my hair is still black. Youth! First in the field. First in the race. First in a woman's arms. A new cup for a new toast! I drink to youth and folly!
- All To youth and folly!
- Carshana To wisdom and three score years and ten!
- Memucan To the wisdom and folly of the world! To woman!
- Shetar To the pearl of women!
- Abmatha (Starts up) That's my wife! Her cheeks are as the lilies bathed in the morning dew. Her eyes are as the fishpools which hold the noonday sun.
- Tarisa (Starts up) Who talks of wives in the presence of Tarish, Prince of Persia? As the grape before it is trodden is to the wine which gladdeneth the heart of man, so are the wives of all the Princes compared to my wife. Her hair is as a net of fine spun gold. Her breasts are as twin towers made of ivory. Her breath is as the incense....
- Mores (Starts up) The beauty that can be inventoried with words is but the blowing of the wind in the trees. I drink to the beauty that no words can tell. My wife, the Queen of Woman.

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- All (Rise) Mine. Mine. Mine.
- Ahasu. (Rises) Peace! In all the hundred and twenty-seven provinces that make up my land, there is but one Queen of Women. A new cup for a new toast! Vashti, the Queen of Ahasuerus. Bride of the Sun!
- Officer The King drinks.
- All The King drinks.
- Shater Thou art the sun, Ahasuerus, and I but one of the seven stars that stand around the throne. But I repeat my toast. My wife, the Queen of Women!
- All Mine! Mine! Mine!
- Ahasu. Peace! As Ahasuerus is above all men, so is Vashti above all women. For one hundred and four score days have I not feasted you in Sausan, the Palace? You have seen my horses and my chariots, my vessels of gold and silver. You have beheld my palaces made of stone, my gardens with cedar trees from Lebanon. You have beheld my people paying tribute from every province of my land. For a hundred and four score days you have beheld the glories of Ahasuerus, the King, but all these are as the night before the day: compared with the greatest of them all - the beauty of the Babylonian I have taken to wife; the glory of Vashti, the Queen.
- Memucan All these things we have beheld, Ahasuerus, but we have not beheld the Queen.
- Ahasu. By Mithra, that you shall. Bid the chamberlains approach.
- Officer The King calls for the Chamberlains.
- (They approach)
- Ahasu. Go, bid the Queen come to the Banqueting Hall, that the Princes may gaze upon her beauty and go blind.
- Chamb. May the King live for ever. If thy servants take this command to the Queen, they shall be scourged with rods.
- Ahasu. (Gives a ring) My ring will save your backs. Say to Queen Vashti, "Arise from thy royal throne, put the crown upon thy head, take a golden cup in thy right hand and another in thy left and thus appear before me and the one hundred and twenty-seven crowned Princes that they may know thou art the fairest upon earth."
- Carshana The word of Ahasuerus is better than the deed of another man. We will believe without proof.
- Ahasu. The King has spoken. Go.

(Exeunt Chamberlains)

Ahasu. (To Princes) Be seated.

(They sit)

Teller (Off) Thy tribute is told in full, Shimshi, son of Shimra, depart in peace.

Ahasu. Bid the tellers of tribute depart.

Officer May the King live for ever. The day's tribute is not yet told in full.

Ahasu. How many does it lack?

Officer One, Mordecai, the Jew, the richest tribute of them all.

Haman (Aside) Mordecai, the Jew, the man I hate.

Ahasu. Where is the Jew?

Officer May the King live for ever. He stands without.

Ahasu. Then bid him stand within.

Officer Approach.

(ENTER MORDECAI)

Mordecai Unto Ahasuerus, the King, peace.

Ahasu. Who is this man?

Haman May the King live for ever. A Dog of a Jew. His tribute must be watched.

Ahasu. He has the bearing of a Prince.

Shatar He wears a jewel worthy of a King.

Officer Let Mordecai, the son of Jair, depart.

Haman Hold. Is the tribute told in full?

Officer The tribute of Mordecai, son of Jair, is never told.

Haman Slave, would you cheat the treasury of the King? Why is his tribute never told?

Officer Within the city gates it is a proverb that the word of Mordecai is better than the oath of another.

Haman The tribute shall be told. Stand by.

Ahasu. (Holds out sceptre) Bid the Jew approach.

Haman May the King live for ever. The people say in the streets that the Jews have the Evil Eye.

- Ahasu. The King has spoken.
- Haman (Contemptuously) Stand before the King.
- Mordecai Unto Ahasuerus, the King, peace.
- Ahasu. That jewel on thy finger, - what is its price?
- Mordecai It is without price, oh King.
- Ahasu. To whom does it belong?
- Mordecai (Presenting it) To thee.
- Ahasu. By Mithra, a King's gift given like a King. A new cup set with jewels. (Touches it with his lips) The wine is royal; the cup is thine. (Gives it to Chamberlain who takes it to Mordecai)
- Mordecai Unto the King health; but I may not drink.
- Ahasu. Does the Jew refuse to drink with the King?
- Mordecai A Jew may not eat or drink with any but a Jew.
- Ahasu. By Mithra, is that the custom of your tribe?
- Mordecai It is the commandment of our God.
- Teller (Off) The tribute of Mordecai, the son of Jeir, is told in full.
- Mordecai Have I the King's leave to depart?
- Ahasu. Depart? All men beg favor to remain in the presence of the King.
- Mordecai It is the Passover of my tribe, - if I beg favor to withdraw from the presence of the King it is that I may go to make ready to stand in the presence of the King of Kings.
- Ahasu. Thou art a strange man. Depart in peace.
- Mordecai Unto Ahasuerus, the King, peace.
- (EXIT MORDECAI)
- Haman A dangerous man, oh King.
- Ahasu. (To man with tablets behind the throne) He likes me well. Let the memory of the King remember me the name of Mordecai, the Jew.
- Haman (Bangs down the goblet)
- Ahasu. What ails thee? Why is thy countenance so overcast, thy eyes so wild? Why dost thou gaze with such fury upon the ring? 'Tis thine. (He holds it out to him)

- Haman May the King live for ever. Shall the King's servant wear the jewels of the man who refuses to honor the King?
- Ahasu. What of that? The Jew but followed the commandment of his God.
- Haman There is no God higher than the King.
- Ahasu. Thou art a faithful friend; it likes me well. And now, as I listen to thee, it comes to me that I have had it in my mind to do thee honor these many days. Behold the seat at my right hand is empty; come thou and fill it. It is thine.
- Haman May the King live for ever - I am but Haman, son of Hamadatha. That seat is only for a Prince.
- Ahasu. The King has spoken. Take thy place. (Murmur of dissent) If there be any here who murmur when the King has spoken, he shall die. Behold the man whom the King delights to honor. Bend the knee to Haman, son of Hamadatha, even as unto Ahasuerus, the mighty King of Kings, the King of this great and mighty earth. The King drinks to Haman. (He drinks)
- Cupbearer The King drinks. (Blare of trumpets. They all bend the knee)
- Ahasu. (To Haman) Be seated.
(The Princes all kneel)
- Ahasu. So do I love to see them, these proud Princes, trembling in the dust. So is it throughout all Shushan. When the King says come, they come. When the King says go, they go. When the King says live, they live, and when the King says die, they die. There is no will in all Shushan but the will of Ahasuerus, and there is no God in all Persia higher than the King. Rise, Princes. You may take your seats.
(They rise from their knees and sit)
- (ENTER the SEVEN CHAMBERLAINS)
- Ahasu. There is a saying in Persia a good father first chastises, then rewards his sons. I am your father, ye are my sons. I have rebuked your pride, now will I give you your reward. Tremble, oh Princes, for the greatest hour of your lives is at hand. Let the Queen come in! (Holds out golden sceptre) Why does she tarry? The King has spoken; she has naught to fear.
- Chamb I (In consternation) May the King live for ever. Behold thy servants are as the dust beneath thy feet. (They do homage) The Queen is not without.
- Ahasu. Where is the Queen?

Chamb I May the King live for ever, the Queen is in her house.

Ahasu. The Queen is in her house when she was commanded to stand before the King. Let the Executioners stand forth. The Queen shall die.

Haman Perchance the Queen is sick?

Carshana Perchance the Queen is dead?

Ahasu. If the Queen were sick, my message should have cured her. If the Queen were dead, her dust should have returned to life and her spirit returned from the grave to stand before the King. (Changes entirely) Yet, she is beautiful and for the sake of that beauty, I will withhold my hand. Speak, Slaves, what said the Queen?

Chamb I (They bow to the ground) If we repeat the saying of the Queen, we shall die.

Ahasu. Speak and live. (Holds out sceptre)

Chamb I May the King live for ever. The Queen said, "Go, tell the King, I am the Queen Vashti, the daughter of Eveel Marodach and grand daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, the King. Ever since I was born no man has beheld my face save only Ahasuerus, and I refuse to come and unveil my beauty in the presence of the Princes and the King. (Consternation among Princes. The King takes the goblet of wine and flings wine on the floor)

Ahasu. So shall her blood be spilled upon the ground. The King has spoken! by the law of the Medes and Persians which alter not. Go, slaves, and bid the Queen prepare to die.

(EXEUNT CHAMBERS, then SOLDIERS and PRIESTS. Then two EXECUTIONERS are going)

Ahasu. Hold. Is there not one of you who has a word to say? Behold the Queen is beautiful: she is a woman and passing fair. Is there not one of you who has a word to say? Behold the Queen is royal like to yourselves and she is to die the death of a base born slave. Is there not one of you who has a word to say? Behold the Queen is young in years. Ye have wives and children of your own. Is there not one of you who has a word to say? (To one of the Princes) When your son died, the Queen strewed his body with fresh herbs and wept upon his corpse. Have you not a tear to shed? (To Carshana) When your life hung in the balance the Queen pleaded for you on her knees, yet you sit in your chair at your ease as if you were stricken dumb. By Mithra, she has well spoken, "Why should she unveil her beauty before you?" By Mithra she is fit mate for a King.

Mem. May the King live for ever. I have a word to say. I am the youngest in the Council and by the law of the Medes and Persians have the first right to speak.

Ahasu. Speak.

Mem. Vashti, the Queen, has not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the Princes and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the Queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported; the King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti, the Queen, to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto the King's Princes, which have heard of the deed of the Queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. If it please the King, let there go a Royal command out from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes that it be not altered that Vashti come no more before the King Ahasuerus and let the King give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the King's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his Empire (for it is great) all the wives shall give to their husbands honor both to great and small. I have spoken; now speak ye.

All (Rise) It is well spoken, Memucan, thy words are ours.

Ahasu. And thou, Haman, son of Hamedata, what hast thou to say?

Haman (Kneels) May the King live for ever. I am but the dust before the King. What the King wills, I will. What the King says, I say. Let the Queen live or die as the King chooseth for there is no law in Shushan, but the law of Ahasuerus, and no God throughout Persia higher than the King.

Ahasu. Thou art a faithful slave. Take thy place. Let the King's memory remember me that when the Princes contended with me in Council, Haman spoke as a Prince should speak unto the King. For the words of Memucan, do thou answer for me, Haman. Thou art my voice.

Haman May the King live for ever; the words of Memucan are good words, for according to his saying so shall the husbands in Persia have honour, and the Queen of Ahasuerus shall not die.

Ahasu. It likes me well. Let there be letters written unto all the King's provinces to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language that every man rule in his house, and let it be published according to the language of every people from India to Ethiopia over the hundred and seven and twenty provinces which make up the Kingdom of Ahasuerus, the King. (Scribes bow. King sits) Behold how I

love ye, oh my people, that for the sake of the honour of the husbands in Persia, I sacrifice my Queen. Yet she is beautiful and the light of the sun shall be quenched for Ahasuerus if the Queen stands no more in the presence of the King.

Mem. May the King live for ever, there are other women in Persia whose beauty may compare with the beauty of Vashti, the Babylonian. I am the youngest in the Council, and I have spoken. Is it the King's will that I speak a second time?

Ahasu. Speak.

Mem. May the King live for ever. Let there be fair young virgins sought for the King, and let the King appoint officers in all the provinces of the Kingdom that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan, the Palace, and let the maiden who pleaseth the King be Queen instead of Vashti.

Ahasu. It likes me well, Haman, son of Hamedata, see that this thing be done.

Mem. A new cup for a new toast. I drink to Ahasuerus, the King.

Ahasu. The King drinks.

Cupbearer The King drinks.

All To Ahasuerus, the King!

TABLEAU CURTAINS.

ACT 1. SCENE 2.

SCENE: A Room in Mordecai's House.
The table is spread for the Passover Feast.
There are several places laid, with cups for wine
and the one at the head is of glass.
At the head of the table is placed a tray covered
with a white cloth. On the tray are three unleavened
cakes, the shank bone of a lamb, a roasted egg, some
little cakes of brown material and a stick of horse
radish with a little cup by the side.
There is a seven branched candlestick with candles
on the table.
The whole aspect of the room is one of joyous festivity
in the home of a wealthy man.

(ENTER ESTHER followed by REBECCA with
a bottle of wine)

ESTHER Set down the wine. No, here. See, a spot upon my
uncle's glass. Go, thou, Rebecca, quickly and bring a
cloth; one of my mother's of Egyptian silk. I will
light the lamps.

(EXIT REBECCA)

(Does so and hums) "Come my Beloved to meet the Bride.
The presence of the Sabbath let us receive." (Shouts
off. She starts) Shouting and trumpets at this hour.
That means the end of the last day's feast. To-morrow
the Princes will go home. Ah, how I should like to see
them. Rebecca says they are dressed in nothing but
jewels and cloth of gold. (She goes to window)

(ENTER REBECCA)

Rebecca Here is the cloth. (Touches her) Hadassan! Hadassan!

Esther How you startled me, Rebecca.

Rebecca Dreaming as usual?

Esther I was thinking what it must be like to wear cloth of
gold and jewels and live in a Palace like a Queen.

Rebecca The Queen is not so happy as thou, I warrant.

Esther Why, the Queen has everything; a palace to live in,
a bed of ivory to sleep in, groves of cedar from Leb-
anon to walk in, a chair of gold to sit in. (Glass
breaks) Ah, my uncle's glass. I have broken it. It
is an evil omen, Rebecca.

Rebecca Behsi mon tob. It is a good omen. It means the break-
ing of your marriage glass. Listen, the shouting and
the trumpets.

Esther Oh, why does my uncle tarry? If he should be caught
by some riotous feasters and get hurt. Ah nis step.
(Runs to door)

(ENTER MORDECAI)

- Mordecai Peace be unto thee, my child, and (To Rebecca) unto thee. (To Esther) Why art thou pale and trembling? What is amiss?
- Esther I was afraid because thou wert gone so long, and, do not be angered with me, uncle, - I have broken thy Egyptian glass.
- Mordecai My glass. 'Tis well t'was thou. Why, what a timid heart it is - Thou art thy mother's child, Hadassah; a gentle creature full of sighs and fears. In the little things of life a frightened child, but in the great moments of danger, strong as a man.
- Esther I fear me, Uncle, there is but little strength in me.
- Mordecai Strength comes from God, my child. He gives it to the weakest in his own appointed time. But come, forget the glass, my flower, and in its place set me a cup of gold.
- Esther Thou art so good. (Kiss his hand) So good; may I not find me lacking in gratitude and obedience if ever the day should come when thou dost call upon me to repay in some part all thou hast done for me.
- Mordecai (Hand on her head) My myrtle blossom.
- Esther Come and look. Have I remembered everything? The three unleavened cakes, the shank bone of the lamb, the roasted egg, the bitter herbs.
- Mordecai The mixed charoset which we eat to remind us our ancestors worked with mortar in the land of Pharaoh. Ah, Hadassah, would that they had dwelt as we dwell, under the rule of a just and benevolent King.
- Esther Oh, uncle; the King, didst thou see him?
- Mordecai Aye, and spoke to him not an hour ago.
- Esther Thou?
- Mordecai Aye, and could have drunk with him, had I not refused.
- Esther Thou couldst have drunk with the King and didst refuse?
- Mordecai Shall a Jew drink with an infidel? But in good truth, it ill becomes me to speak like this, for Ahasuerus, could not have spoken me fairer had I been Nebuchadnezzar, the King.
- Esther What said he? Where did he sit? How did he look? What did he wear?
- Mordecai (Amused) He sat in a chair, he wore a robe, he looked very like any other man.

- Esther Thou dost mock me, uncle.
- Rebecca The child is Ying crazed, master; she talks of nothing but Princes and jewels and cloth of gold.
- Mordecai Thou foolish one; such things make not for happiness. In the Palace of Shushan there is much feasting, much drinking, much shouting, much revelling, but there is one thing in this little room which is not in the Palace of Shushan, peace. As I sit here, with thee by my side, I would not change place with Ahasuerus on his throne.
- Esther (Kisses hand) Dear uncle. (Notices ring off finger) Where is thy ring?
- Mordecai I gave it to the King.
- Esther Did he ask it?
- Mordecai Kings do not ask, Child, they command; but Ahasuerus neither asked nor commanded; he would have bought it had I not refused to name its price.
- Esther Why didst thou refuse?
- Mordecai A Jew does not sell the thing he loves, Hadassah; he with-holds it or he gives it, like a King. Strange, my finger feels quite chill without its accustomed toy.
- Esther Perchance some day, my uncle, the King remembering thy gift, will give thee another ring to take its place.
- Mordecai Kings do not remember, child, they are like children; they crave a toy, they seize it, they break it, they forget it. It is cast aside and another takes its place.
- Esther It must be wonderful to be a King.
- Mordecai It is more wonderful to be a Jew, one of the chosen of Jehovah who shall be Kings in Heaven in His own appointed time. And yet - thou dost say true, it must be wonderful to be a King, to wield the power of Life and Death, to hold the faith of nations in one's hands; with a breath to sweep away a people, and with a smile to restore them to their place. And yet, my Hadassah, this godlike Ahasuerus, for all his greatness, is but a man. I hold not with these Persians over much, but to-day, as we spoke together, this Ahasuerus liked me well; - was it his smile, a glance of the eye, a trick of the voice, who shall say. - but methought, I could have found a man to love and honor beneath the purple of the King. Dreams. Dreams. Thou dost catch thy trick of dreaming from thy Uncle, Hadassah. I chide thee for a failing that I share.
- Rebecca Master, it is time to say the blessing.

Hordecai Then east sea, by spirit's blessing, in talking of things and things I had almost forgot the hour. Come.

(SINGS SONGS)

Benjamin Please be duty free.

Hordecai And into these. Ah, Benjamin, my blessing, a word at later and thou wouldst have been too late.

Benjamin For pardon, but the arrows are arrows with the fountains refer for from the heart. Within a chamber's must have granted some gift to the people, for I could hear their shouting in the market place, thro' which way.

Father Now cousin, let us take thy cloak.

Benjamin Ah, Lily of Shushan, thou dost not prosper every day.

Hordecai (Laid on her head) Hush, ye will wait no longer. Catch the head.

(SINGS SONGS)

Benjamin The child is her mother come back to life; the sound of her voice raised up young again. What is thy vision, prophet? Art thou talking of the day when thy air'll fly into another cage?

Hordecai Nay, Benjamin, that is a day on which I never dare to think.

Benjamin Then what art thou thinking of? Thou dost look so sad as if every Jew in Shushan were stricken with the seven plagues. What is ails?

Hordecai I know not; yet I cannot rest. The child is well, our traffic prospers, the tribute's paid, the King has sworn us fair, yet these sad days I am oppressed. I look at myself for the feeling it has in my little chest. Some dependent calamity, some approaching horror. The child is well, and yet, as I speak her name, my heart burns sick with fear. I had a dream. Good bye comes!

(SINGS SONGS)

Run out the time.

(SINGS SONGS, THROUGH THE CURTAIN)

Isaac Come.

Isaac Come.

Isaac This year we celebrate it here, next year we will celebrate it in Jerusalem. Adieu.

(ESTHER ABRAHAM excitedly)

- Mordecai (Takes his cup of wine in one hand, the book in the other and sings) Barooch Ahtah - Ah -
- Abraham Mordecai, Benja in, Asher. (Mordecai goes on singing) Mordecai.
- Mordecai Who dares to interrupt the blessing of the Lord?
- Abraham There are evil tidings.
- Mordecai Evil tidings must wait while we finish the blessing of the Lord.
- Abraham The blessing of the Lord must wait while you hear the evil tidings. (Mordecai goes on singing)
- Mordecai Barooch Ahtah - Ah, Ad
- Abraham If thou wilt not listen for thyself, then listen for thy child.
- Mordecai The child. (Drops book on table) Speak.
- Abraham The feast is interrupted, the King is angered, Vashti is deposed.
- All (Gathering round excitedly) Vashti is deposed?
- Mordecai What have Kings and Queens to do with us or with the safety of this child?
- Abraham A proclamation has been issued that all the fair young virgins in Shushan shall be gathered unto the Palace that the King may choose a successor unto Vashti, the Queen.
- Mordecai This concerns us not; we are not Persians; we are Jews.
- Abraham The edict says all the virgins of the land.
- Mordecai Hadassah!
- Esther My uncle!
- Isaac Oh, day of darkness!
- Asher Oh, day of tribulation!
- Simeon Woe! Woe! Unto Israel!
- Abraham What are you going to do? Where are you going; to hide the maid? If she stays here, she will be taken.
- Reuben Mordecai, look up and act, this is no time to dream.
- Abraham Will you stand still and let this shame fall upon us, or dost thou hold it an honor that thy daughter become a concubine unto the King?

Esther Uncle, save me.

Mordecai My myrtle blossom, have no fear.

Abraham No fear? Listen. Dost thou hear the snouting? It means the soldiers are close at hand. Dost thou hear the screams? They're rending our daughters from their mother's arms.

Reuben To arms. To arms.

Isaac We are a handful of Jews against the hosts of Antiochus.

Reuben If we cannot save them, at least we can die for them.

Isaac Our death will not save them, boy; we must meet force with strategy.

Reuben That's what our ancestors said. If they had met force with force, the Temple might still have been standing in Jerusalem. To arms. To arms. Better our women should perish by our swords than fall into the hands of the infidel King. (Is rushing off, partly stops him) To arms. To arms.

Isaac Thou art mad.

Reuben May, it's you who are mad who stand here bleating like sheep while our women are led to the slaughter like lambs. Stay you and bleat, or like Mordecai, stand still and dream. I will go to the Synagogue to gather those together who are not afraid to die.

(EXITS)

(ENTER SEVERAL JEWS)

Abin. Woe. Woe unto Israel. Our day of joy is turned into the night of lamentation.

Jacob. They have taken my daughter for the King. Woe. Woe. THEY have taken my daughter for the King.

Naftali Mordecai. Mordecai. Where is Mordecai?

Zippion Mordecai. Mordecai. What are we to do? Thou art one of the elders of Israel. What wilt thou do?

Mordecai I have paid my tribute and am a free man. Who will dare to lay hand upon my child?

Joseph They have taken away my child. What difference is there between thy child and mine?

Benjamin Fly, while yet there is time. Fly. Thy home will be among the first to be searched, every one in the city of Sushan knows that Hadassah is the fairest of them all.

(ENTER ISSICHER)

- Issachar Fly, fly. There is no time to lose. The soldiers are coming down the street.
- Mordecai It is the Passover. We may not stir.
- Abraham Thou shalt live my laws, not die by them is the commandment of our God.
- All Fly. Fly. Before it is too late.
- Mordecai Whither shall we fly! If we go to the tops of the mountains if it be the will of God, they shall find us out. If we hide in the depths of the sea, if it be the will of God, we shall not escape. The Lord is God. Who shall escape His will?
- Abraham This is not the will of God. It is the will of Ahasuerus, the King.
- Mordecai The King can do nothing that is not the will of God.
- Benjamin Come, child, if thy uncle will not hide thee, come with me.
- Esther Nay, he is my father and my mother. I will stay with him.
- Abraham Then stay with him and perish. And when the King is tired of thy beauty and casts thee aside like a robe that is soiled, then cry aloud to thy God and see if He will make thee clean again.
- Esther Uncle.
- Mordecai Blasphemer, I told thee not a hair of this child's head shall be harmed.
- (Knocking off at door)
- Officer (Off) Open in the name of Ahasuerus, the King.
- (Dead Pause)
- Mordecai Rebecca, open the door. (She does so)
- (ENTER OFFICERS followed by five soldiers)
- Officer By the laws of the Medes and Persians that alter not a proclamation from Ahasuerus, the King. "Greeting! Unto all who dwell in the city of Shushan and in the hundred and seven and twenty provinces which make up the Kingdom of Ahasuerus, the King, from India even unto Ethiopia, let all the fair young virgins be gathered together and come unto the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the house of the women, that they may go in unto the King after the days of their purification, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, that Ahasuerus, the King, may choose one from amongst them to be his wife and to have place instead of Vashti who

was his Queen. And whose shall refuse to give up his daughter he shall be hanged by the neck until he be dead on a gallows raised before the doorway of his house.

Officer (Advances. Reads) Mordecai, the Jew, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, thou hast a fair virgin in Shushan as thy daughter who is thy brother's child. In the name of Ahasuerus, the King, I command you to give her up to me.

Esther (Shrinks to him) Uncle - save me.

Mordecai And if I pay this penalty exacted by the law and am hanged upon a gallows shall it then be accounted unto me for quittance and shall my death save this child?

Officer Mordecai, I have known thee this many moons; thou art a Jew and I an Persian, but thou dost like me well. Thou art a man. Thy death will avail thee nothing for by this proclamation I am forced to take away the maid.

Esther Uncle, save me.

Mordecai I am accounted a rich man in Shushan. I have stores of silks and merchandise and cups of gold and precious stones, take them all, but leave the child with me.

Officer Thy riches will avail thee nothing, Mordecai, for thou hast heard this proclamation and it is well known in Shushan that thy daughter is the fairest virgin of them all.

Abraham Thou dost see, thou fool, whether the will of God can save thee from the will of Ahasuerus, the King.

Mordecai Blasphemer, shall I doubt my God? If it be His will that this child shall be taken hence, hence she goes. If it be His will that this child lives she lives, as if it be His will that this child dies, she dies.

(Officer advances)

Madassah, my daughter, go with this man.

Esther Uncle.

Mordecai To-night thou didst say unto me, child, "In the hour when thou dost command me may I remember and repay in obedience and gratitude anything I may have done for thee." I command thee, go with this man, in the name of thy womanhood, in the name of our people, and in the name of our God.

(Dead pause)

Esther Thy will is mine, uncle. I obey. (Turns to Rebecca) Fetch my veil, Rebecca, that I may hide my face.

Rebecca Oh, my child! At least I may go with her. I have tended her since she was a little child, at least I may go with her.

Officer It may not be. The maid must go alone.

Mordecai Rebecca, fetch the veil.

(EXIT REBECCA)

Esther Uncle, Uncle. (Flies to his arms)

Mordecai My myrtle blossom, though thou dost go to dwell within another house, thy home is ever in thy uncle's heart.

Esther But they are strangers there, - women of Persia and Media, who thou hast always told me, hate our people. Their customs are not our customs, their ways are not our ways. How shall I, a Jewish maiden, live amidst their sneers and gibes?

Mordecai Well remembered. Therefore, my daughter, take good heed to put a seal upon thy lips. Speak thou no word of whom thou art, thy name, thy kindred or thy race until I give thee leave.

Esther I will obey in this as in all else. But oh, my uncle, how shall I live, bereft of thy protecting arm?

Mordecai God will protect thee, Hadassah. He goeth where thy uncle may not come. Comfort thee, my daughter. Each day from sunrise until noon and from the fifth hour until sunset, I will sit at the King's gate by the city wall. If thou art troubled, send thy messenger and I will counsel thee.

Esther And thou wilt send me daily tidings of thy health?

Mordecai Each day I promise thee I will find the means.

(ENTER REBECCA with veil)

Rebecca Master, the veil. (She gives Mordecai the veil)

Mordecai (Puts it over Esther) My dove, it is time for thee to stretch thy wings and fly away. Mayst thou find a resting place for the sole of thy tender feet and return with an olive branch between thy lips, my messenger of peace.

Esther Bless me before I go.

Mordecai The Lord bless and preserve thee. The Lord let His countenance shine upon thee and give thee peace. The Lord bless thee with the threefold blessing of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Amen. (She kisses his hand. He draws her to him) My myrtle blossom, who shall bloom awhile in another house, farewell.

Officer Maiden.

Esther I am ready. Father. Friends. Home. Farewell.

(EXIT)

Rebecca My child. My lab. (To Mordecai) How canst thou stand there and see her go?

Mordecai Peace. The Lord hath given. The Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

CURTAIN.

Outside the Palace Gates.

The sun is setting.

There is a booth with gourds, melons and fruit and vegetables which the proprietor is taking down and packing up.

Several Jews are discovered. Some have baskets of fruit and others various implements of trade.

The impression to be conveyed is that the end of the day has come and the people are preparing to go home.

One or two Persians in the background are making purchases from the traders.

Asher What business, Abraham, son of Joseph?

Abraham Good. Very good. I have made seventeen shekels. And you, Simeon, son of Isaac?

Simeon (Shakes head) Not good. (He takes purse out, drops the money into his hand and counts it) I have made only three shekels and a quarter. Not enough to pay for the new robe Rachel bought at the last Passover.

Asher Ah, that's bad, for your Rachel likes fine clothes and fine clothes cost money.

Benj. Well, well. If trade is bad to-day, to-morrow it will be good. The King is in Shushan for the great Spring festival. The women in the harem will need your goods.

Simeon Would that there were twice as many women in the harem, then there would be twice as much need for my embroideries and twice as much profit for me.

Abim. Remember you break bread with us to-night.

Abraham Aye, I remember.

Abim. I would Mordecai would come, too. Look where he stands apart, like one of the statues in the King's Court.

Reuben Or like one of the King's courtiers who never speaks unless he is spoken to. Speak to him Abimelech, perchance if you ask him again he will come.

Abim. (Goes to Mordecai) Will you not change your mind and come with us to-night?

Mordecai I thank you, friend, but I cannot leave this spot.

Benj. The sun is setting. In a little while the night will fall. What keeps you here when the day's work is done?

Mordecai I've had no word from Esther yet. Each day since first they took her from me and brought her to the palace, I have waited for news of her well being. The sun has almost set. It is the first time my messenger has been so late. My heart forgives me. My child is ill.

Benj. Why should the child be ill because the messenger is late?

Mordecai I do not know. I cannot tell. But I have a feeling here about my heart that warns me of some danger to my house.

Benj. Give no heed to feelings about your heart to make you sad; for see, at the very mention of your fear, the palace doors are opened and Harsi, the chief eunuch, comes forth.

(HARSI ENTERS)

Mordecai My Esther's messenger. (Goes to him) Harsi, what news?

Harsi The child is well.

Mordecai Then all is well. (He smiles)

Benj. A moment since thy brow was black as night with fear, now thy face shines with joy like the sun at noon.

Mordecai Aye. Joy is the sun of life.

Harsi Here is thy Esther's letter. Now I must be gone.

Mordecai You'll wait to take my letter back?

Harsi Have it ready against my return. I go into the city to fetch perfumes for the ladies of the harem. Look at this list. You would think they sat in Yashti's place already by the demands they make. Sandal balsam, attar of roses and of lilies, camphire and sassafras, cassia and cinnamon; myrrh and aloes, frankincense, - the most expensive spices. They'll have them all to prepare themselves against going in to the King. How different from your little Esther who asks for nothing and is content with what the royal keeper of the women gives her.

(HARSI DEPARTS)

Benj. You see the folly of Mordecai's way.

Mordecai Jehovah be praised. All is well with Esther; but the no-vices still hang about my heart.

Shouts off wall to woman! Wall to woman!

Mordecai That is that noise.

Simeon 'Tis Harsi, the son of the eunuch, passing through the

street. Wherever he goes the people shout.

Asher Eye. They are paid to shout.

Abraham Eye. They shout for him even louder than for ourselves
himself.

Isaac Ebed Abraham's raised his to the seat next his father,
it is whispered that he plots to sit in the throne him-
self.

Abraham That is the price of death, his wife. Her ambition
reaches to the skies.

Abraham Will to Israel! Will to Israel!

Isaac We were to shut them down once and shout with all
your might.

Abraham I shout before to Israel. Will to Israel! Will to
Israel!

(Enter a crowd running)

Abraham Israel is coming! Israel is coming! Lead the way before
the son of Abraham!

(Enter a crowd)

Abraham Israel is coming! Israel is coming! Lead the way before
the son of Abraham!

(Enter a crowd)

Isaac Israel is coming! Israel is coming! Merciful, you re-
fused to lead to Israel's prosperity. His followers may
be increased against you. Flee to him. Flee to
his way to escape death.

Abraham No. Flee, Jew, Jew.

(Enter a crowd)

Abraham Israel is coming! Israel is coming! Flee, Jew,
Jew. Flee to the shadow of the King.

Abraham (To himself) They will not save you from us, but
we shall make choice to make our way for Israel's
prosperity.

Abraham It is the power of the King that all about Israel
shall be set. The King shall be Israel's King.

Abraham What is this power? Is it some kind of power like cur-
sives and laws, but a few years to live before he re-
turns to the dust from which he came. Shall I lead
before the King. I lead the way only before the
King and Israel for all will be set in his hands
and Israel shall be Israel's King.

(The crowd begins to enter)

All Haman! Haman! Hail to Haman, the shadow of the King.

(Enter Haman)

(He is borne in a gorgeous litter, with an officer in front of him)

Officer Way for Haman! Make way for the shadow of the King.
Make way for Haman, the son of Hamedata!

All (Kneel) Hail Haman! Hail Shadow of the King!

Officer (To Mordecai) Kneel to the shadow of the King.

Mordecai Never.

Haman Hail! Who dares to stand when Haman passes?

Officer It is Mordecai, the Jew.

Haman The man who refused to kneel before me yesterday!
Bend the knee, dog of a Jew, when Haman comes.

Mordecai (Stands with folded arms) Yesterday I refused to bend
the knee to Haman and shall I bend to-day?

Haman You shall bend before me, even as one of your fathers
bent before one of my fathers.

Mordecai Which of my forefathers bowed before your forefathers?

Haman Your father Jacob bowed before Esau and Esau was the
ancestor of Haman.

Mordecai I am the posterity of Benjamin and when Jacob bowed be-
fore Esau, Benjamin was not yet born and he never in
all his life bowed before a man.

Haman Whether your ancestor Benjamin bowed before a man or
not, you, Mordecai, shall bow before me.

Mordecai (Looks at him) Mordecai may die, but Mordecai will
never bow before Haman.

Haman Then Mordecai shall die. And not Mordecai alone, but
the people from whom Mordecai has sprung. I go to
the King. He shall deliver you and all your tribe in-
to my hands to be punished for your presumption.
Take up my litter. To the King.

Officer Make way for Haman, son of Hamedata! Make way for the
Shadow of the King!

(Haman's procession exits through the Palace gates fol-
lowed by the Persians shouting) Hail to Haman, son of
Hamedata!

- Reuben (Coming to Mordecai) Why did you not kneel to him?
- Simeon It would have pleased him and could do you no harm.
- Abim. Why did you not kneel?
- Mordecai Why should I kneel to Haman when it is forbidden to kneel to any man?
- Issachar Think not of yourself, Mordecai, but of us. You heard what he said. Not on you alone would his vengeance fall but on us, because of you. His pale face grew white as death with passion and his eyes flashed fire. If they had struck you dead, we should now be rending our garments for you.
- Mordecai The fire that flashes from men's eyes cannot kill. Only the fire that flashes from the sky.
- Benj. If his eyes cannot kill, his voice has the power to slay. He will encompass your death and ours, too. We need you in the Synagogue, Mordecai.
- Simeon We need your counsel to guide us in the path we have to go.
- Issachar Aye, kneel when he returns. Remember Esther. She needs you, too, although she is in the Palace of the King.
- Abim. Kneel when he returns. Perhaps if he sees you humbled, his wrath may be appeased and he will not seek for vengeance.
- Asher Aye, kneel, Mordecai, if not for your sake and for ours, for Esther's. Even though she's in the Palace of the King, she'll not be safe. They'll find out she is a Jewess and they'll drag her forth and slay her if Haman slays us as he said he would.
- Reuben Why do you stand as if you were hewed in stone, Mordecai and speak not?
- Mordecai I have spoken. What need is there to speak again?
- Reuben It is useless to argue with him.
- Simeon He is like the granite pillars of the palace gates.
- Abim. The sun is set.
- Abraham Darkness has fallen.
- Asher Let us go.
- Issachar Aye. Let us go. O my God, do not extend his hand as he has threatened and put out our lights as the night puts out the light of day.

(They go off)

Benj. (Going) Peace be with thee, Mordecai.

Mordecai And with thee.

Mordecai What little faith they have to think that Haman can prevail unless it be the will of God. (Retiring into the shadow) Yea, even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, He will support me.

(ENTER BIGTAN)

Bigtan (Comes on. He peers around) Not here yet. (He gives a characteristic call and whistles)

Teresh (Off) (Repeats the whistle)

Bigtan He is coming. He comes.

(TERESH ENTERS from the opposite side)

Bigtan Well?

Teresh (Puts his hand into the breast of his dress and draws out a little packet) Good!

Bigtan You have it?

Teresh (Nods) I have it.

Bigtan Good! Did you have any trouble to obtain it?

Teresh No man has trouble who has gold enough to pay. Is any one about?

Bigtan Not a soul. The Jews have all gone home.

Teresh To-night Ahasuerus will go home; the home from which there's no return.

Bigtan He will sleep to-night more soundly than he has ever slept before. He will not need to send for his physician to give him a potion to make him sleep again.

Teresh We'll be his physicians to-night. This powder which we'll mingle with his wine before he sleeps will make him sleep for ever.

Bigtan To-morrow's sun will rise, but Ahasuerus will sleep on.

Teresh The moon will rise and still Ahasuerus will sleep on for countless moons and countless suns.

Teresh Ahasuerus whom we hate shall die to-night. Never again shall he have us scourged and mocked as we were mocked and scourged yesterday.

Bigtan A little powder, a cup of wine and Ahasuerus, King of Persia, Lord of the hundred and twenty and seven prov-

inces shall be no better than a dead dog on which the flies feast in the road.

Teresh After to-night he will lie no more in the war and yielding arms of woman, but in the cold and frozen arms of Death.

Bigtan Let us divide the poison, so that which ever of us two shall attend him to his bed to-night may be able to mingle it with his wine.

Teresh (Flours half-out) Be careful to wash your hands as you go in, lest any shall have fallen on them, for it should kill you, so potent is it.

Bigtan I'll heed your warning. Let us go in.

(MORDECAI and TERESH)

Mordecai (Advancing) So they would kill the King. I must prevent it if I can. (He takes a parchment from his dress and a stylus. He writes) "All is well with me. Two of the King's Eunuchs who attend him have plotted to kill him to-night by putting poison into his wine. I overheard them as they spoke. Get this knowledge to the King and save his life. Thy uncle who loves thee, Mordecai." Now to get this writing to her. Hegai.

(ENTER HEGAI with the basket on his arm)

Mordecai (Advancing towards him) My friend Hegai.

Hegai I am back again. Oh, the prices I have had to pay. (He takes out a phial and holds it up) Attar of roses. Eighteen minahs! And three months ago, the charge was only twelve. (He takes out another phial) Attar of lilies, - Haroun, the perfumer, weighed it against gold pieces. Mihrman, the sun-moon, will have nothing else. Oh, these women! They are not worth what men pay for them, but they get it all the same.

Mordecai Leave thinking of the women.

Hegai Leave thinking of the women! That is what I am paid to do.

Mordecai (Impatiently) Leave thinking of the women and listen to what I say. (He draws his close; whispers) There is a plot to kill the King.

Hegai A plot!

Mordecai Aye. Two or those who wait on him have conspired to put poison into his wine to-night.

Hegai How do you know?

Mordecai I overheard them as they spoke just now. I was in the shadow of that pillar and I heard each word they spoke.

See! (He takes out the letter) It is written. Here.

Hegai Your letter to Esther?

Mordecai Aye. To Esther. If she could get it to the King.

Hegai She shall take it to the King.

Mordecai How?

Hegai The twelve months of her preparation have been fulfilled. She has been ready these fifteen days and were to go in to the King. She shall go to-night.

Mordecai To-night?

Hegai To-night, - with your letter in her hand, that she may save the King from death. Who knows but that she was preordained for this, - to bring honour to our people.

Mordecai Our people?

Hegai Yes, Mordecai, son of Benjamin, our people. Within the King's palace I am Hegai, the keeper of the women, but when I was a new child in my father's house, I was Reuben, son of Daniel, of the Tribe of Benjamin.

Mordecai My kinsman.

Hegai Before I was defaced, I was thy kinsman. But now I am as though I had never been, - a walking shadow, fit to be trusted in the care of the King. What greater degradation can the God of Israel have for any of His chosen?

Mordecai Revile not Jehovah, Reuben, son of Daniel. God works by devious ways His wonders to perform. To-night I have heard this plot against the King. Had you not been keeper of the women, Esther could not have heard it. Some other virgin could go in to the King. He would drink the wine his chamberlain presented to him and ere he closed his eyes in sleep, he would have closed his eyes in death. You are a minister in God's hands to save the King's life.

Hegai You have put a new heart into my breast, a new light into my eyes, Mordecai, son of Benjamin. Give me the letter. Esther shall bear it to the King.

Mordecai (He takes Hegai's hand) My kinsman.

(EXIT HEGAI)

Mordecai The myrtle blossom of my lonely house; God's instrument on earth. (He kneels and throws up his arms) Unto thee, O Lord, I bend the knee, Thou God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.

(CURTAIN)

The Interior of the Harem.

Several ladies are discovered, attended by their maids and two or three eunuchs.

Some recline luxuriously on couches; others sit in chairs. By the side of most of them, there are little tables upon which are goblets of sherbet and cups out of which they drink, and beautiful boxes of sweetmeats which they eat from time to time. The maids are brushing their hair, manicuring their fingers, painting their eyebrows, etc. At one side sits Shalparah, a very fat girl. She eats sweets all the time. At another sits an old woman grey haired and wrinkled dressed in black.

- Shanfeda (Who is sipping sherbet out of a golden cup) This sherbet is not sweet enough. It needs more honey. Take it and bring me fresh.
- Eunuch (Takes the cup and goes)
- Harbana (Lying luxuriously on her back on a couch with her arms above her head. She puts a finger into the box of sweetmeats, takes one up, looks at it, puts it into her mouth, lets her arm fall above her head and eats it. She sighs languorously) These sweetmeats are delicious. I'd like to eat nothing else for ever.
- Farmys If you eat so many, you will get as fat as Shalparah. She has not seen her feet for three years and more.
- Harbana It matters nothing whether one is fat or lean. When one is shut up in the harem and I like the sweets. (She holds one out at arm's length and looks at it) Therefore, I eat them. (She puts it into her mouth)
- Old woman (Apart to herself, rocking to and fro) I was young once. Once I went in to the King.
- Shanfeda (Lifts her hand up to her head. Sharply) Don't brush so hard! Do you think my head is made of wood and cannot feel? Brush softer.
- Mihmah I much prefer a eunuch to a woman to brush my hair. He seems to take a pleasure in its touch.
- Shanfeda It isn't only your hair a eunuch finds pleasure in touching. I saw Feresh kissing you by the rose water baths last night before the lamps were lighted.
- Mihmah And if you did, what then? I was affianced to a man when he dragged me from his land and brought me here. Such a man! Tall and strong with fierce arms that trouble me to this day and a mouth of flame that set my mouth on fire. Now I loved him to take me in his arms and press me to his so that I could scarcely

breathe while he rained kisses on my mouth. I have been here a year and I miss what I once had. I'm honest and confess it. There's not one of us who does not let the Munches kiss us just for the sake of practice.

Perisade I don't. Give me a man or give me nothing! What satisfaction is there to beating one's self for only women to gaze at? I want a man, a real man, to admire my beauty.

Marion (leaning forward with her elbows on her knees, her hands clasped together and her chin raised on her thumbs) You women are better than nothing. There is a certain pleasure in making them jealous.

Shanfeda (laughingly) Now why would you think you'll make jealous, dear?

Marion When a woman calls me dear like that, I know she is jealous already.

Shanfeda Some people have a fine opinion of themselves.

Marion (holding up a mirror) Why couldn't I have a fine opinion of myself? My mirror tells me to do more than my mirror. Only yesterday, when I praised the luster of my eyes, the oval of my face, the beauty of my nose, the whiteness of my teeth, the roundness of my chin, the curving of my back, the straightness of my leg, the smoothness of my skin and about it a man.

Marion The King's capon is dead!

Marion He has a man's eyes and he will have a man's admirer. That one will praise, another one is like to praise. What he admires, the first will praise, too.

Shanfeda What has come to the King? He has received an lady from the Munches for each of two great needs.

Marion They say he grows of youth still.

Marion Marriage who was the first to visit him says Vauti's picture still hangs above his bed.

Marion Is that woman's heart so set on Vauti that no other woman's beauty can offend it?

Perisade I would not starve his eyes of woman's beauty for ever. Now or later, Munches will receive us. When my turn comes to go to him, I shall give him a robe of flashing silk with red, stars in it, hair, rib, rings on it, flowers, and, like on a tree, a ruby necklace. Would he care if that Munches say that that is a man's capon? He will be dead.

Shanfeda We will be gone, dear.

Marion I have picked it all already. A robe of silver cloth

with silver shoes upon my feet, a silver crown upon my head, great bands of silver on my arms, all shining bright, that Anasuerus may think the sun has come from heaven to lie within his arms.

Arbanu And I shall go to him all black and secret as the night with diamonds on my fingers, wrists and ears, my hair shimmering with rose like stars in the sky that he may think the night's become incarnate to hold him in her arms and steep his senses in oblivion.

Barrys Beautiful! I would those six women to their places that we might feast and feast we still be starved, still hunger to be satisfied. For me, especially roses and sapphires, with painted ears like catered with coral bosses on my breasts, and jewelry far below my waist a diamond diadem on a golden chain.

Perisade So that is how you'd spare the fish to get the crown of Ishti on your head, and Ishti perhaps you are right, fish are not so good and are fish which anglers catch with bright, colored bait.

Urath The hook that catches men-fish that is baited with a woman.

Shafada You have caught one, Urath. You ought to know, how many fish have you caught?

Urath I'll tell you that when I have come forth from the ring.

Old Toran (as before) I was young once. Once I went in to the ring.

Urath Say so they will these old fools to come into the preparation hall to wait to know or what we shall become when they are done and get out with us.

(A drum roll attended by a chorus of girls & boys.)

III (Chorus to the end of the first act, all, Regal! Regal! Regal!

Arbanu Are you proud of them, my children?

Perisade Did you not see hairpins and beads scattered?

Barrys There is not a trace of roses and calamus?

Urath Give me an altar of lilacs.

Shafada Did you bring me the same horrible star asked for for my finger ring?

Melparsh Are you proud of assistants of Nebat?

Regal (Chorus all hands and feet are giving life to the glorious Ishtar, such is the will of power, here is the house that will never fail.

Your herd. Your business. Your altar of lilies.
Your static distasteful and your odorless comb. (Breaches
to Shalparahi) and your sweetest of Rahot.

(The girls express their delight in a chorus of exclamation. Shalparahi calls out of a voice full not peacefully.)

Heral (dolls around) But where is father?

Shanfeda Oh, do you always ask for father first?

Heral I'm afraid. I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

(A short pause.)

Heral What is the best one about the more favor in your eyes than we do?

Heral The more you like the more favor in my eyes than you.

Shanfeda I do.

All Yes I. And I. And I.

Heral The more I like you to the more, you want for the richest and the most delicate perfume.

Shanfeda You want for your distasteful, the same the same of perfume. I know it for the king of perfumes sent some to my father for my use.

Heral And you have her nice dresses.

Heral And magnificent dresses.

Heral Have you not all nice dresses and magnificent dresses?

Shanfeda Yes, but her dresses were richer and her ornaments were costly than mine.

Heral And she was more than me. She always wears a single robe of white.

Heral You give her more than I give you.

Heral I don't give her more than I give you.

Shanfeda The more you give me, the more I give you the daughter of a prince, will she!

Heral Those daughter in law.

Heral Yes, indeed.

Heral Yes, indeed.

Heral And never again I'll be a girl.

Shanfeda If she has the chance of a prince, she'll speak about them.

- Ahrahah She would if she were you. You always talk about your father, the prince.
- Farbanu I'm tired of hearing about the prince.
- Farqs So am I.
- Ahrahah In the morning, it's my father, the prince. At noon, it's my father, the prince. In the evening, it's my father, the prince. How many princess were your father's?
- Sharfeda How would you know? You know all her names that.
- Sharfeda If you can't find her - (looking for them with her hands upraised and her fingers spread) - I'll tear your faces with my nails.
- Agai Peace! Peace! Peace! I'll have no fighting here. In the house, women make the peace work!
- Sharfeda With blood be considered. The daughter of a prince should not have to wed the daughter of a nobody.
- Agai In the house of the king there are no daughters, only women to be! Beauty is the standing stone by which each one may reach the throne.
- (SOUND EFFECTS)
- Isther You sent for me?
- Sharfeda Of course, he sent for you.
- Ahrahah He sends for you every day when you are not here.
- Isther Is that by fault?
- Sharfeda If you could find favor in the eyes of Ahmadrab as you have found it in the eyes of Agai, you'd sit in Vashli's place.
- Isther (Smiles) How do I find I should think to sit in Vashli's place when you are in the house? For ladies are very beautiful than I. Some of you are daughters of high nobles; some of you have princess for your girls. Even if I should be allowed to sit King, I could never hope to be called Agai.
- Ahrahah Every woman can hope to be called Agai.
- Sharfeda I wish there were women.
- Farqs All women are appointed to be a man.
- Farbanu You're tired. If you'll not rest to night be scratched the soil of sandy earth, we'll scratch every other man's nose to day.

- Charb. So-night Ahnasaras will receive a law, of the Heron.
- Legal Did the King call any lady by her name?
- Charb. No. To-night, the King desires to see beauty.
- Shanfeda Let us go, Legal.
- Perisade No, no.
- Vurbane I am in the mood for love.
- Arays And I am looking for a woman, whom I could forget. To-night, the state, the world, and ourselves only love.
- Legal Let me go Legal, this puts her down about his neck and to-morrow night, I will yield my neck to you and you shall be my Charbanus.
- Legal (Indignant) For what does Legal his neck? It is Ahnasaras who kisses after Legal, not Legal who kisses after Charbanus.
- Shanfeda Over the King's crown grow.
- Arays In all courts should be treated and offer you their warts.
- Perisade What are you going to say, Leg?
- All Yes, yes? Yes, yes? Yes, yes?
- Legal Rather.
- Shanfeda) Of course.
and the) - He might have known it.
others.) That could you accept?
- Arays Well, he can choose her only eyes. Next time, it best to your feet or your or your or line.
- Legal Rather.
- Rather (Starting from a reverent) Oh called?
- Legal The King receives to-night.
- Charb. He is identified, too. Prepare her rapidly.
- Legal I have to hear her and shall be in the King's arms.
- Charb. This will.

(A short silence.)

- Oh yes! The - (Sings) - and I was gone. And I took it to the King.
- Shanfeda Legal! Oh dear! The picture of drama.

- Hogai (to Esther) How ready to attend the King.
- Esther I am ready.
- Verisade Ready!
- Amefeda Do you think you are so beautiful, you need no ornaments?
- Amarah It will take me three hours to make ready when I take leave.
- Arays I shall wait upon you.
- Parbanu I should like to die to die for you, with your ornaments and God's will, but I am afraid to go to bed the King.
- Hogai Well, when your turn comes, you shall have all you need. You need not retire to your chamber, but the one who is chosen may be crowned for our King's honor to go to with the King.
- Verisade Well, Amarah.
- Aarah I suppose we have not to go. I shall have to go with Amefeda.
- Ameparah I shall go with Amarah, and I shall have to go with Amarah to see the King's house.
- [The King and the Queen enter.]
- Hogai It is the custom that whatever you desire shall be given you to please the house of the King to the King's house.
- Esther I shall have to go with Amarah, and I shall have to go with Amarah.
- Hogai Your robe is simple. There are rich silks, and with a golden, glittering with jewels, to enhance your beauty that you may find the highest favor with the King.
- Esther As I see, so will I go unto Amarah.
- Hogai Then I will call your women to plait your hair and that your feet and that your eyes and that the King's eyes were filled when he looks upon you.
- Esther As I see, so will I go to Amarah. With no red and no gold, no black or no eyes, no courtier and no wealth. But God has given me fast I will give to Amarah.
- Hogai But we have three you to give Amarah is more than any woman yet has given or ever will.
- Esther What do you mean?
- Hogai No more.

- Father His life!
- Legal And this. The letter and letters.
- Father The mother's letter.
- Legal Read it.
- Father (Lays ready: "All is well with me." "Good God! Thank God! Two of the child's lungs are affected and have started on this air to-day by positive signs in his arm. I overheard them he says. Let him have some of the medicine. He is in bed. He is the best man, I believe." "Where is the letter? They would like the flag.")
- Legal They would. The mother's were also.
- Father (Lays ready: "No.")
- Legal (Lays letter in envelope still open that ^{plot} ~~is~~ is the mother's letter.)
- Legal The letters will pick up here.
- Father (Lays envelope still as given. (Lays card: "Good-bye, Mrs. I will see you all when you have been for me.")
- Legal I have some nothing. Where you will. The wife of our Father's is with you.
- (The mother goes out. The old woman is sitting by the door, looks up and stretches out her hand.)
- Old Woman The art focus.
- Father (Cont'd.) I see nothing.
- Old Woman Father! It is a great one and a great one. With a great flag!
- Father (Cont'd.) I go in to the flag.
- Old Woman (Starting; looks to the flag) And I was young. When I went in to the flag.
- (Lays card: "Good-bye.")
- Chas. The flag reaches the top.
- Father I'll come. I'll come. I'll come. I'll come.

The King's Bedchamber.

In the center is a golden bedstead over which hangs a life size portrait of Vashti.

At one side of the stage is a gold serving table with golden and glass goblets and golden flasks of wine, golden bowls filled with fruit, etc.

Nearer the footlights than the bed, in the center of the stage is set a table on each side of which golden couches are placed.

At a table by the side sits a Scribe dressed in black who writes continually on a sheet of parchment.

Ahasuerus is discovered with Xerxes and Teresh in attendance on him under the direction of the chamberlain. He reclines on a couch and is washing his hands. Xerxes pours water over them from a golden ewer into a golden basin which Teresh holds. A third woman stands with a towel in readiness, two to each couch, are placing them by the side of the table.

Ahas. (Impatiently) Hasten! Prepare the repast. (He takes the towel and begins to dry his hands on it) Why does the woman carry whom Megai has chosen for me to-night?

Chamb. She will be here directly, Sire.

Ahas. Am I a servant in my house that I should wait? (He flings down the towel) Or am I lord of life and death whom all obey at once?

Chamb. (Picks up the towel) The instant your Majesty's command was heard, the keeper of the women made preparation to obey it.

Ahas. What is she like? The woman whom he sends? My eyes at first to-night for woman's face and form, my arms are hungry to enfold her after their long starvation. Is she very fair, this woman whom Megai has selected?

Chamb. Oh, here, she is most fair. Fair as the tender dawn; her skin is fairer than any woman's I have ever seen.

Ahas. Her hair - what of her hair?

Chamb. Not brown or black or stained with dyes; but gold, as if the sun had got entangled in its coils.

Ahas. Your words inflame my impatience to behold her. Go! To Megai! Will he hasten this message to me.

- Ahasu. The blood burns hot within my veins to-night. It will burn hotter still if she's as beautiful as he described.
- Hanan (off) Nay to the King that Hanan, son of Amosai, is here.
- Voice (off) Prince, the King is private at this hour.
- Hanan (off) Do as I bid thee. Nay Prince Hanan waits without.
- Ahasu. (Tosses up) What is that conflict in the outer court?
- (MUSIC CHANGES)
- Servant My liege, Prince Hanan.
- (MUSIC HANAN, earlier part)
- Hanan My liege.
- Ahasu. Thou! I have not summoned thee. By what right dost thou intrude thy presence on us thus?
- Hanan My liege, the matter is most urgent or Hanan would not thus thrust himself into the golden presence of the Shadow of God upon Earth.
- Ahasu. What is this urgent matter that brings thee here at this time of the night?
- Hanan My liege, there is a certain people scattered among the nations in all the provinces of the Empire.
- Ahasu. What of them?
- Hanan It is not to the King's advantage to tolerate them in the State. They should be destroyed.
- Ahasu. But they are many. A whole people. Would not the state suffer by their destruction?
- Hanan They are a profitless people. They do not walk according to our laws, but by their own. They have no pleasure in our customs, only in their own. They do not serve the King.
- Ahasu. Not serve the King?
- Hanan No, my liege. They serve neither our King nor our Gods. When they see us, they spit upon the ground and say we are heathen. They refuse to give their daughters in marriage to our sons and their sons will not marry our daughters. The day they want to buy from us, they call a lawful day. The day we want to buy from them, they call unlawful and close the market to us. The day in the week they keep as a day of rest on which they go to their temples, read in their books, interpret their prophecies concerning our King, interpret our actions, and say, "This is

the Sabbath Day on which the Great God rested."

Ahasu. How dare they place their God above our God?

Haman But that is not the worst they say, as the golden ears of Ahasuerus would hear if he could hear them speak. They cry, "May this foolish kingdom be blotted from the world." They pray and supplicate to that the King may die and his government be destroyed.

Ahasu. What!

Haman When their kingdom was yet standing, there arose a King among them whose name was David. Two parts of us he killed and rooted out, and one part he left. Of those he left, he made servants. After him rose up one of the Kings who was thy predecessor. His name was Nebuchadnezzar. He went against them, destroyed their temple, plundered their city and led them into captivity. Still, they are high spirited and have not given up their haughtiness till now.

Ahasu. We must curb their pride.

Haman Aye, my liege, it needs curbing. They say, "We are the children of renowned fathers and we have never subjected ourselves nor bowed to Kings, neither have we obeyed governments. More; they send letters to every place as in for prayers to their God that the King may die and that our rule may be destroyed. All this they do in secret. The King has no advantage in tolerating them or allowing them to exist.

Ahasu. If all this be true, they are a menace to the land.

Haman They are a menace and, like every other menace, should be rooted out. If it please the King let him write an order for their extermination and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver from my treasury to the King's to compensate for them.

Ahasu. It is a large sum to pay for so profitless a people.

Haman How can one offer less to the shadow of God upon earth?

Ahasu. Thou hast no right to sell them, nor has Ahasuerus right to buy them.

Haman But shall we suffer them to plot against the King and pray that he may die?

Ahasu. If they are as thou sayest, the silver is given them and the people with it to do as seems best in thy sight.

Haman I thank thee, Shadow of God upon earth. Nor will I have a proclamation drawn.

Ahasu. (Taking off his ring and giving it to Haman) Here is my ring to seal that proclamation that the world may

I know that Hamaan acts by order of the King.

(ENTER THE CHAMBERLAIN)

Chamb. My Liege, the lady whom thou didst command is here.

Ahasu. At last! (To Hamaan) Go, friend, see to it that these people vex not my presence any more.

Hamaan My Liege, I go. (Hamaan bows low and exits)

Ahasu. Bid the lady enter.

Chamb. (Bows and exits)

Ahasu. (puts his right hand to his forehead and draws it across) So let me wipe away all thoughts of state and remember only love.

(ENTER CHAMBERLAIN showing in ESTHER)

Chamb. The lady Esther.

Esther (Curtseys low) My Liege.

Ahasu. (Raises his hand to Bigtan and Teresh who are watching him. They go, one to each side of Esther, take her arm and raise her up)

Ahasu. (Bows) My lady.

(TERESH and BIGTAN retire into the background)

Ahasu. By Mithra, but you are good to look upon. They told me you were beautiful, but they did you wrong. They told me you were fair as the tender dawn; but they did you wrong, your beauty is resplendent as the noon.

Esther My Liege.

Ahasu. Thy eyes make my eyes slaves to thine. I cannot see thee for their shining.

Esther (Drops her eyes)

Ahasu. Nay, do not drop thy eyes, raise thee to mine that I may feast upon them.

Esther (Raising her eyes) I am a loyal subject of the King and my eyes obey the dictates of my lord.

Ahasu. Thy throat is like a tower of ivory and thy bosom's like twin alabaster vases carved by the sculptor's skillful hands. Thou hast ensnared my heart as no woman has, since Vashti queened it there.

Esther In the woman's court, they say no lady ever yet compared with Vashti in King Ahasuerus' eyes.

Ahasu. She was the rose in my garden of love, but thou art the

lily. The skin is white as is the lily's stem; the hair is as the pollen stalks within its cup, and the breath as fragrant as its perfume on the evening breeze. Where didst thou get thy beauty, woman of all beauties? Who are thy people? What is thy family? Tell me that I may do good to thee because of thee.

Ether My love, I cannot tell. I am ignorant of my people and my family. For when I was a little child, my father and my mother died and left me.

Ahasu. Then will I do good to all the nations who dwell beneath my rule that I may be certain of doing good to the people of the woman I love.

Ether Does the King love Esther?

Ahasu. I love thee and I will pledge my love. (See faras to Chamberlain: Wine.

Chamb. (Sit the back to Ahasu and Teresh: Wine.

Teresh (Takes up the flagon containing the wine. Puts his finger to his lips to enjoin silence)

Ahasu. In my Egyptian goblet of glass. (To Esther: It is the most precious that I have: - That I may do fitting honor to the most precious woman in the land.

Ahasu. (Takes a phial from the breast of his tunic and pours a little into the goblet, then quickly puts the phial back into the breast of his dress, lifts the golden tray on which the goblet is and brings it down to Teresh who begins to pour the wine into it)

Ahasu. Fill! Fill! To the brim. (He takes the goblet. The two men move backwards)

Ahasu. The King drinks to Esther.

Ether (With her left hand catches the King's right forearm and arrests his movement; with her right hand she snatches the goblet from him but some of the wine spills. Do not drink, my liege.

Ahasu. (Getting angry) Dost thou presume upon my passion for thee to snatch the wine cup from my hands?

Ether No, my liege, I dare do nothing to save thy life. The wine is poisoned.

Ahasu. Poisoned!

Ether & Teresh (Sit the back start and whisper together)

Ether Poisoned.

Ahasu. How dost thou know?

Ester Hold this, my liege.

Ahasu. (reads) "All is well with me. One of the King's eunuchs who attend him have plotted to kill him to-night by putting poison into his wine. I overheard them as they spoke. Get this knowledge to the King and save his life. Thy uncle who loves thee, Herdecai." How dost thou know that what is written here is true?

Ester If Herdecai says it, I will swear it.

Ahasu. (Takes the wine cup from her. Calls to the chamberlain) Bring me another cup. (To Ester) Give me the goblet.

Chamb. (Brings down cup)

Ahasu. (Pours out wine from one goblet into the other. Gives both goblets to the Chamberlain) Now bid them drink. If the wine be poisoned, they will die here, in my presence.

Heresh & Mitan (Both start and walk towards the door)

Ahasu. Stand still and move not.

Ester See how they tremble at the thought of death. Is not that proof enough?

Ahasu. Bid them drink.

Ester Not here, my liege. Not here! I could not bear to see them die.

Ahasu. So be it. (To the chamberlain) Prove if the wine be poisoned by some subtle test.

Chamb. (Takes a phial from the table and pours some into the wine) My liege, it is the poison of the scorpion. See how the red is turned to green.

Ahasu. Take them to the outer court and bid them drink that wine and bring me word when it is done.

Chamb. (obeisance) May the King live for ever.

(Exit Chamberlain with the two men)

Ahasu. Thou hast saved my life.

Ester Not I, my liege, my uncle Herdecai.

Ahasu. Herdecai. Herdecai. (He turns to the eunuch) Write in the book of the Chronicles of the King the name of Herdecai and how he saved my life that I may not forget it.

Ester Shall I be the King's eunuch and bring his wine?

- Ahasu. My beauty shall be no wine to-night. I will drink thee instead of wine. (He turns to the Scribe) Is it written as I commanded?
- Scribe. Yes, my Sire.
- Ahasu. Then close the door and go.
- Scribe. (Closes the door, rises and bows)
- (... IT SINGS)
- (... CHAMBERLAIN)
- Chamb. My Sire, they drink. They're dead.
- Ister. So perish all who plot against the King.
- Ahasu. (To chamberlain) Go. Draw the curtains, close the doors. I would be private.
- Chamb. (Sings to guards who withdraw. He draws the curtains, exits, closes the doors)
- Ahasu. (He turns to her, and holds out his arms) Thou hast saved my life, thou lily of Sausan, how shall I reward thee?
- Ister. To save the King's life is reward enough.
- Ahasu. For thee, but not for me. I will crown thee with jewels, deck thee with precious gems. Thou shalt have slaves to number with each day of the year.
- Ister. Slaves and gems and jewels make not a woman's happiness, my Sire. She needs other things.
- Ahasu. What other things?
- Ister. The common things of life, the things the beggar shares with the King, - the love of husband, children, friends.
- Ahasu. I will give thee love and children, friends, if thou dost love me. Dost thou love me?
- Ister. When the King commands, his subjects must obey.
- Ahasu. I can command obedience, loyalty, fidelity, but even I cannot command a woman's heart. Dost thou love me?
- Ister. Let the King lay the ears of his heart to mine and attention to what it speaks.
- Ahasu. (Takes her in his arms) My heart to thine! What dost it say?
- Ister. (Trembling in his arms) I never saw a man so love another. I saw the face of my Sire.

- Ahasu. Say it again. Not as a subject to her legs, but as a woman to a man. Say those words again.
- Father I never saw a man to love, until I saw thy face.
- Ahasu. My woman queen. My queen of women. As man to me, so do I kneel to thee. (He kneels to her) Thy arms about my neck. Raise up thy hand to the white valley of the breasts. Bend thy jewelled mouth to mine that I may drink' emancipated from its wire.
- Father (Kisses him)
- Ahasu. Again! Again! The perfume of thy breath pleases my senses, thou lily queen of my life. Kiss me again! again! (He takes her in his arms and rises) So do I kiss thee. Let me braise thy mouth with mine. Thou shalt sit beside Ahasuoras on his throne and I'll be beside Ahasuoras on his bed. Thou shalt be queen, - my queen!
- Father (Bitterly) The Queen of a night!
- Ahasu. Not of a night. Queen of all nights and of all days as well. There is no other woman to compare with thee. Vashti was my scarlet queen but thee, my lily of Jerusalem; my lily queen - thou shalt rule my life, queen it over the hindoo and over me.
- Father Shall I be queen and Vashti's picture hang above thy bed?
- Ahasu. (Looks at her and smiles) So thou art jealous; jealous even of her picture. Jealousy is surest proof of love. Hadst thou not confessed thy love, I should have known it by those words. Before thou liest by my side to-night, her picture shall be taken down that even her painted eyes may not behold the rapture of our love.
- Father My liege, a moment since thou didst offer me a gift and I refused it. Now I ask it of thee.
- Ahasu. What wouldst thou have? 'Tis thine.
- Father A painted picture of myself that I may give it thee to hang above thy bed.
- Ahasu. Thou star of my life. It shall be my talisman by night to guard my life as thou didst guard my life to-night; and, in the day, my memory that when I look upon it, I may recall her it was thou who saved my life.
- Father My liege.
- Ahasu. My queen. (He places crown on her head) No do I crown thee noon of my heart, Queen of my life, Queen of my kingdom, Queen Esther, Ahasuoras' Queen. (He takes her in his arms. Silence)

A small room in the palace of Haman. There is a door on one side and a practicable window at the back through which the star streamer sign is seen and the moonlight streams. On a table in the center stands a celestial globe and by it various astrological instruments and a lighted lamp. At the table sits Haman, the astrologer, working out his calculations.

At one side of the table is Zeresh, Haman's wife, and at the other is Haman who leans on the table watching with eager, hungry eyes what Sheshai is doing.

Zeresh He would not bend the knee to thee!

Haman As I told thee; - alone, he stood upright; he lifted me to my face - though all the others melt.

Zeresh He must be very brave.

Haman He is very arrogant, but I will crush his arrogance; crush him as well and all his people, too. I hate those Jews and will destroy them - all. That is why I bade Sheshai cast the lot, that I may know the day propitious for the deed.

Zeresh Thou art licensed indeed against this wickedest of men for his sake thou canst cast the lot to destroy the whole nation of which he is but one.

Haman I hate him and because of him I hate them as the sacrificers of old hated them when their prophecies prevailed against the wisest men of Egypt.

Zeresh Thy power is great as thy anger. Thou art the first man in all the world who ever bought a nation.

Haman I bought the Jews to destroy them. But ten thousand talents of silver, but ten thousand times ten thousand talents would I have given that I might wipe them from off the face of the earth.

Zeresh Fierce is thy hate, as thy love is fierce.

Haman Fiercer is my hate for the Jews than is my love for thee. How canst thou desire the death of my wife. (He turns to Sheshai) Stand now with your enchantments. Speak. Have you cast the lot?

Sheshai I have.

Zeresh Are you ready to read the answer?

Sheshai I am.

Haman What say the stars?

Sheshai For know the movements of the stars have influence over the life of man.

- Haman (Impatiently) I know. I know. What do they say?
- Shamshai You also know that the stars do not lie.
- Uman I know. I know. (More impatiently)
- Jeresh What say the stars?
- Uman Stand up, star gazer, and tell us what the stars reveal.
- Jeresh Give you Ibrat all that we speak of you?
- Shamshai (Rising) Age. By searching the notion of the stars in the celestial mansion I have deciphered what you seek.
- Uman Then tell us what.
- Shamshai The first day of the week is propitious for this project for on it the God of the Jews created the heavens and the earth.
- Uman What of the second day?
- Shamshai That is propitious, too, for on it the Firmament was made.
- Jeresh The third?
- Shamshai It may not be upon the third for on it the Garden of Eden was created.
- Uman Why tell the propitious days? All I want to know is the propitious day. Tell me what is not decreed at what is.
- Shamshai That is not as well decreed as what is. The day must be revealed as well as the other. You must be patient.
- Haman I have no patience. Had you stood there, the ruler of the city, and been defiled by a dog of a Jew, you would be impatient, too, to Ibrae your hands in the blood of him and all his people.
- Shamshai The longer I stay speechless, the longer does he keep away the knowledge that the stars vouchsafe.
- Uman Then I think I must be heard, I forgot even the stars and what they tell. Speak on and let me hear.
- Shamshai The fourth day is forbidden, for on it the sun, the moon, the seven stars and the twelve signs were created.
- Uman What of the fifth? Surely the fifth is favorable.
- Shamshai Not so, for on it were created the Leviathan and the eagle of the wood. It is a very unfavorable day.
- Uman The sixth day, then?

- Shamshai On it the Jewish God created man and woman. How then should Haman prevail against the Jewish man and woman?
- Haman If not the other six, then the seventh?
- Shamshai The seventh day is the Covenant between the word of their Lord and the people of Israel.
- Haman Then, is no day of the week propitious for my purpose?
- Shamshai The stars vouchsafe no day; so I cast the lot by months.
- Haman Well, what says the lot by them?
- Shamshai (Gives Haman a scroll) Here is the record of their months. Follow it with me.
- Haman Tell me the lot. That is what I crave to know. (Looks at scroll and runs his finger down the list) Ten months you've marked as unpropitious for my purpose, what of the other two?
- Shamshai In the eleventh month, Shebat, the first fruits of the orchards are offered to their Lord.
- Haman Eleven unpropitious, what of the twelfth?
- Shamshai That is the month the stars point out.
- Haman The last at last! Show me this month upon the chart.
- Shamshai (Pointing with his finger) It is here. It stands beneath the fishes.
- Haman Now are the Jews caught by my hands, like the fish of the sea.
- Shamshai Adar is the name of the month.
- Haman Tell me what is the day. Have you deciphered that?
- Shamshai Aye, I have deciphered that. The thirteenth of the month.
- Haman By Mithra, that is good. The thirteenth of Adar. 'Tis written in my heart.
- Zeresh And in my brain.
- Haman (To Shamshai) Go summon Scribes that know the language of each of the hundred and twenty and seven provinces that make up the King's Empire that they may write the proclamation that gives these accursed Jews into our hands.
- Shamshai (Bows) It shall be done and quickly.
- (EXIT SHAMSHAI)
- Zeresh And when thou hast written, how will the people know

the proclamation to be true?

- Haman (Showing the ring on his finger) Here is the King's ring which the King has given me to seal it. The thirteenth of Adar. Now, Dog of a Jew, thou shalt lose thy head because thy knees were too proud to bend.
- Zeresh Wait not until the thirteenth of Adar for some other hand to slay him; let him not live to refuse to bow the knee to thee again.
- Haman What dost thou mean?
- Zeresh Slay him thyself. His knees would not bend, then let his neck break. Let a gallows be made and hang him on it.
- Haman (Admiringly exalted) Thy hate is fierce as mine.
- Zeresh Piercer than my love for thee is my hate for any who defies thee. Make the gallows now; and high. Thou art the greatest man in all the land. Therefore, let the gallows be higher than any ever built. Let it be fifty cubits high that all within the city walls may see him as he hangs, and tremble to bow down to thee.
- Haman I am the greatest in the land, but I am not lord of life and death. Ahasuerus still is King. He only has that power.
- Zeresh That power shall be thine if thou art brave enough to take it. Thou dost sit at the right hand of the throne. We will so plot that we shall kill Ahasuerus and some day thou wilt sit in the throne itself. Ahasuerus must give place to thee.
- Haman Thou art a man for boldness in thy plot. But till that day come -
- Zeresh Ahasuerus has given thee this people to do with as thou wilt. He set no time for their destruction. What matters then when you kill one of them?
- Haman If I usurp Ahasuerus' power now, his anger would burn against me and he might have me slain.
- Zeresh Then go to him. This Mordecai has defied thee. Thou art the right hand of the King. In defying thee, he has defied the King. That means death. Ahasuerus will deliver him to thee.
- Haman Thou art as subtle as the serpent, and as wise. I will give orders for the gallows. Fifty cubits shall be its height as thou didst say. Let us go in to supper with our sons and at to-morrow's dawn I'll go to the King to ask the life of Mordecai, the Jew.

CURTAIN.

The Palace Gates.

On one of the pillars of the Gate is posted a copy of the proclamation.

It is dawn.

Mordecai is discovered, hooded and cloaked, standing motionless as if he had been waiting for some time. There is a pause. He wears a gaberdine of sack cloth which is rent on the left breast and his head is grey with ashes.

The Palace gate opens and Hegai enters. He looks round cautiously, sees Mordecai.

Hegai (To Mordecai) She comes. (He looks ^{at} her; nods, and beckons with his finger)

(ENTER ESTHER)

Esther (Going to Mordecai) Uncle.

Mordecai My child. (They embrace)

Hegai Be brief and quick! It is forbidden for the Queen to walk beyond the Palace walls.

Mordecai The Queen! She is my child.

Hegai But she is Ahasuerus' Queen. He has set the royal crown upon her head. It might be death were she discovered here. (He takes up a position of watchfulness, looking from right to left)

Esther I would have come last night when I received thy letter, but I did not dare, lest the King might call for me and I were not in my chamber to receive the summons.

Mordecai Art thou the Queen and Ahasuerus' slave as well?

Esther No slave, Uncle. I am free. Free as the bird you told me flew into my mother's room the day I was born.

Mordecai Yet unlike that bird, although the royal crown is on thy head, thou canst not come and go at thy own pleasure, but must obey the summons of the King.

Esther Loyalty is not a matter of pleasure but of duty. A royal wife has duties to her husband just as the meanest woman has.

Hegai (Coming to them) Talk not of Kings and Queens but of yourselves. Time presses. (Returns to his place)

Esther Thou knowest it is decreed that none may come to the Palace gates clothed in sack cloth, yet thou dost do it.

Last night I sent my chamberlain with rich garments to take thy sackcloth from thee and thou didst return them.

Mordecai Shall I wear rich garments in a time of mourning for a people who are doomed to die? (Points to it) There is the decree that bids the nations rise up against us and destroy us.

Esther For ten thousand talents of silver which, thou didst write me, Haman has promised to pay to the King.

Mordecai That is the price for which Ahasuerus has sold God's chosen people to this son of Amalek.

Esther If thou hadst bent the knee to Haman, his anger would not have been increased against thee and through thee against our people and this calamity would have been averted. Why didst thou not kneel to him, Uncle? Kneeling could not harm thee.

Mordecai That is what the others said. Art thou like them? Because thou art Queen of Persia, wouldst thou be false to the commandments of the God of thy fathers?

Esther Nay, Uncle. In the King's palace I obey the laws of Israel as I obeyed them in thy home. What is thy will?

Mordecai Go to the King and intercede with him that he may revoke this proclamation and so save our lives.

Esther Thou knowest that whosoever, whether man or woman who is not called, shall come unto the King into the inner court, there is one law of his - to put him to death, except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre that he may live.

Mordecai Well, what of that?

Esther I have not been called to come in unto the King these thirty days.

Mordecai What of that?

Esther Vashti lost her life because she did not come when she was called. May I not lose mine if I go in unto the royal presence when I am not called?

Mordecai What of that? What is thy life more than the life of any other woman in Israel? Even though the King hold not out his golden sceptre, still must thou go in unto his presence.

Esther Uncle!

Mordecai Think not that thou shalt escape in the King's house more than all the Jews. If thou dost escape Death at the King's hand, thou wilt meet it at Haman.

Esther (Shuddering) Horrible!

- Mordecai They will drag thee even from the golden arms of Ahassuerus and destroy thee. Therefore, do not neglect thy opportunity. If thou hold'st thy peace at this time, then shall He who is the Holy One cause enlargement and deliverance to arise to the Jews from another place but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this.
- Esther Speak no more. I will do thy bidding. Go gather all the Jews that are present in Shushan and bid them fast for me and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so I will go in unto the King which is not according to the Law; and if I perish, I perish.
- Mordecai My child, if thou dost perish in this world, thou shalt have a portion in the world to come. (He embraces her) Thou art indeed a true daughter of Israel.
- Hegai (Comes up to them) The sun has risen. People are coming hither. We must return at once within the Palace.
- Esther Farewell, Uncle. (She bends her head)
- Mordecai (Kisses her) Farewell, my daughter. I knew thou wouldst be steadfast in the hour of affliction. (He puts his hand on her head) The Lord bless thee and preserve thee.
- (EXIT ESTHER and HEGAI)
- Mordecai Fast for her three days and nights. (He takes the Shofar from his robe and blows it)
- (The Jews enter from both sides)
- Benj. (Apprehensively) What is the meaning of the blowing of the Shofar?
- Asher Who is it blows?
- Simeon Mordecai.
- Benj. What is the matter? You are clothed in sackcloth.
- Abim. You have ashes on your head.
- Abraham Your garments are rent as one who mourns.
- Mordecai (Pointing) That is the matter.
- Benj. A proclamation?
- Reuben A new decree?
- Mordecai Aye. A proclamation, a new decree.
- Reuben When was it posted there?

Mordecai Last night.

Benj. What is its purport?

Mordecai Death to you and me and all of us.

Benj. Death?

Reuben To all of us?

Mordecai Aye. The King and Haman have decreed that we shall all be killed, destroyed and rooted out.

Simeon The King and Haman.

Abim. Read the proclamation. What does it say?

Reuben (Going up to it) From me, King Ahasuerus, to all who live in the land, peace be multiplied. I have known to you that Haman, son of Hamedata, has informed me concerning the Jews and their blameworthy laws and affairs. After mature deliberation, I have given these people to him to be slaughtered.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Simeon (Reads) He that understands to handle the bow, let him use the bow and he that can fight with the sword, let him seize the sword and go your out and overpower them on the thirteenth day of the month that is called Adar.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Abim. (Reads) Do not spare either their princes, their rulers, their great men or even their little children, but kill them and spoil their goods.

A woman even the little children.

Asher Peace.

Jacob Let us hear it all.

Abim. Aye. All.

Reuben In witness whereof is set the King's seal. That is all.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Benj. The whole people of Israel to be wiped out.

Simeon Twenty-four hours of slaughter.

Abraham There is no escape.

Abim. The streets will run with blood.

Jacob The land will run with blood.

- Reuben All this has come upon us because of you, Mordecai, son of Benjamin. Had you inhaled to Haman like the rest he would have taken no more heed of us than he took before.
- Benj. Revile not Mordecai. He acted as his conscience taught.
- Reuben Talk not to me. You are old and I am young. Your life's behind you and mine is all in front. I have a young wife, a little child. Shall I stand by and see them killed before my eyes or be killed in front of them?
- All Woe. Woe. Woe.
- Simeon Jenovah has forgotten his people.
- Mordecai Jenovah never forgets his people.
- Simeon Your faith is strong, but what is faith against the strength of that? (Points to the proclamation)
- Mordecai It is the strength of God against the strength of man.
- Reuben God is in His Heaven, and that is here on earth. It is the strength of the Jews against the strength of all the people in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces that make up the Empire of Ahasuerus. It is the lily against the oak.
- Mordecai Have you not seen the lily bend before the storm which has rooted up the oak?
- Issachar (Who has been standing looking at the proclamation comes down) It is not until the thirteenth of Adar. Let us flee.
- Abin. Whither shall we flee? We are imprisoned. The whole Empire is our prison.
- Abraham What shall we do?
- Simeon We are like sheep without a shepherd, like a ship without a pilot.
- Abraham Oh, that we had a King as in the days of old.
- Issachar Oh, that we had a Prophet who could pray for us.
- Benj. We have no Prophet, but we have Mordecai. Tell us what we shall do.
- Mordecai What says the Law? - "When thou art in tribulation, turn to the Lord, thy God." Go to the Synagogue. Fetch the Sefer Torah and let us open it and read it where it opens. To, Aaron, son of Aaron, of the priestly tribe. It is your office. Fetch the Holy Law. Go with him, son of Levi.

Benj. And you, Jacob of the Tribe of Dan, go too.
 Asher And I will go with him.
 Zippion And I.
 Naphtali And I.
 Isaac And I, that I may help to bring the Holy Law with honor to this place.

(THEY EXEUNT)

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Mordecai Jehovah has turned back the hands of time. The palace gates of Shushan have become the weeping wall of Jerusalem. As at the waters of Babylon, there sit we down and weep.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Benj. Wine fills the cups of Persia, tears fill ours.

Simeon (Comes to Mordecai) Think you that when we open the Law, Jehovah will vouchsafe a message to his people?

Abraham Why should Jehovah vouchsafe a message now? If He protected us, He would have prevented that decree from being sealed.

Mordecai Who are you to say what Jehovah will do and what He will not? Between now and the thirteenth of Adar are many months.

Reuben Let us tear down the proclamation.

Mordecai If to tear it down could prevent that edict being carried out, I would have torn it down the instant it was put up.

Reuben Still I'll tear it down.

Mordecai What shall it profit us? That decree has gone forth to every province in the land. I saw the messengers start forth while you slept in the night.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

(The singing of those who went to fetch the Scroll of the Law is heard off. The men all look in its direction)

Mordecai The Holy Law!

Benj. Aaron and the others with the Sepher.

Abin. Let us go and meet them. (They move off towards the side)

Simeon If Jehovah would vouchsafe a message.

Abraham A message! Jehovah talk's not with his people in these days. This is Shushan not Mount Morian and we have no Moses now.

Reuben (Scathingly) No; only a Mordecai.

Mordecai Aye, only a Mordecai - but Jehovah can speak through the lowliest of the low if it be His will. We shall see. They come!

(ENTER AARON and the OTHER JEWS)

Aaron (Bears the Scroll of the Law. It is covered with a magnificent mantle of silk, embroidered in gold, and is surmounted by a pair of golden "bells" which tinkle as he moves)

Mordecai (Goes to the Scroll, takes up the siltten covering in the right hand and kisses it reverently. So do Benjamin and the others, except Abraham) The Sepher is decked for joy not for sorrow; for rejoicing not for lamentation. Take off its golden "bells;" take off its siltten robes as if it were the ninth of Ab. Cover it with sackcloth and sprinkle ashes on it that it may mourn with us.

(Benjamin and Isaac advance and take off the golden "bells." Simeon removes the covering. Zebulon brings a piece of sackcloth)

Mordecai Rend it, that its garments may be rent, even as ours in the days of mourning. (They cut the sackcloth and tear it and cover the Scroll. Then Mordecai picks up some ashes from the ground and pours it upon the Scroll)

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Benj. Open the Sepher.

Asher What will the message be?

Abraham Who says there'll be a message?

Mordecai Peace.

Benj. Open the Sepher.

Isaac Who shall open it?

Benj. Who but Mordecai. Whose faith not even Hanan's wrath can shake.

Several Open the Scroll, Mordecai.

Asher Read the message of the Lord.

Mordecai People of Israel, Beloved and Precious to God, pray with me that Jehovah may vouchsafe a message to us in the hour of our affliction.

All Amen Va, Amen!

(While Mordecai speaks, Benjamin and Isaac advance, take off the robe from the Scroll and Zippion undoes the wrapper which binds the two halves together)

Mordecai (Takes the two handles and opens the Scroll wide. He raises the Scroll above his head. He turns round for a moment to each of the four points of the compass so that all the people about him may see the writing.) This is the way which the Lord thy God gave to thy fathers by the hand of Moses, the faithful of His house. (He brings the Scroll down and men hold it on each side. Still holding the handles, Mordecai fixes his eyes to heaven.) Hoo God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, vouchsafe a message to thy people. (He puts his hand down on the Scroll)

Benj. Read the word, Mordecai.

All What is the word?

Mordecai (Reading) The Lord thy God is a merciful God. He will not forsake thee; neither destroy thee nor forget the Covenant of thy fathers which he swear unto them.

Isaac (Overjoyed) Dost hear? He will not forsake us nor destroy us.

Officer (Off) Way for Haman! Way for Haman!

Persians (Off) Haman! Haman! Hail to Haman! Son of Hamadatha!

Abraham He will not forsake us nor destroy us! And on the word comes Haman to disprove it.

Mordecai Haman comes, but who says that he disproves the word!

Reuben Haman disproves it. (Points to the proclamation) That disproves it. The thirteenth of Adar disproves it.

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Persians (Off, but a little nearer) Hail to Haman, son of Hamadatha!

All Woe. Woe. Woe.

Benj. (To Mordecai) Esther is Queen. Canst thou not get her to go in and intercede with the King that he may countermand the edict?

Mordecai I have seen Esther. But a little while ago I spoke with her. In three days she will go to the King and intercede with him. Till those three days are passed, she fasts from food and drink and she bids us all maintain an equal solemn fast with her.

Simeon Three days?

- Mordecai Three days and nights; from food and drink; that we may make intercession to the Lord. Will you keep the fast of Esther?
- All Aye. We will keep the fast of Esther.
- Officer (Off) Way for Haman! Way for the Shadow of the King!
- Persians (Off) Long live Haman! Long live the Shadow of the King!
- Reuben Hail to Haman! Hail to the Shadow of the King!
- (Jews begin to kneel!)
- Issachar (To Mordecai) Kneel with us, Mordecai, kneel. It may aid; his wrath.
- Mordecai (Points to the proclamation) He has done his worst. What more can he do?
- Abraham He may withdraw the decrees.
- Mordecai The decrees of the Persians never are withdrawn.
- (ENTER HAMAN)
- Officer Way for Haman! Way for the Shadow of the King!
- (ENTER HAMAN'S PROCESSION)
- All Hail to Haman! Hail Shadow of the King!
- Mordecai Hail to Jehovan! Hail to the God of Israel!
- Haman So you still stand in my presence, Dog of a Jew. Wait until the thirteenth of Adar. The stars have yielded you and all your people to my hands, for in that month your prophet Moses died.
- Mordecai Your stars deceived you, Haman, son of Hamadatha, for in that month was Moses born.
- Haman What matters birth or death? Adar stands beneath the fishes and in that month you and your people are caught by my hands like the fish of the sea.
- Mordecai Like the fish of the sea they shall multiply among men upon the earth. That was the word Jehovah spake unto Israel in the days of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Shall he unsay those words in the days of Ahasuerus, King of Persia?
- Haman Wait until Adar and see.
- Mordecai Aye. Wait until Adar and see.
- Haman You would not bend the knee. Then shall you die, for I will hang you on a gallows.

- Mordecai (Exultedly) Even on the gallows my knees will still be straight before the eyes of Haman.
- Haman On! (He turns to Mordecai. Vindictively and fiercely) Before the thirteenth of Adar!
- All Hail to Haman! Hail to Haman! Shadow of the King!
Hail to Haman!
- All (Jews pick up the ashes from the ground and put it on their heads and read their garments) Woe. Woe. Woe.
- Mordecai (Exultedly) He will not leave thee nor forsake thee, neither destroy thee nor forget the Covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.

CURTAIN.

The King's Bedchamber as in Act 2. Scene 3.
Vashti's portrait has been taken down and Esther's
hung in its place.

Ahasuerus is discovered lying on the bed.

The Chamberlain is in attendance. By the side of the
bed stands a slave with a large decorated palm leaf
fan fanning Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus turns restlessly in
bed, breathes heavily and wearily.

A Harpist sits near the King's bed and plays.

- Ahasu. Oh-h-h-h! I cannot sleep. Give me a drink. How many
hours have I lain and tossed upon the bed?
- Chamb. (Pouring out water) Five hours and more, my Liege.
(He brings the goblet on a golden salver to the King)
- Ahasu. (Sising) What is this drink?
- Chamb. It is the water of Coaspes River, Sire, that is re-
served for the King alone.
- Ahasu. (Who has been drinking) It is most cool and pleasant.
(Takes the goblet on the salver. Wearily) Oh, if I
could sleep.
- Chamb. If the King would lie quietly on his couch, sleep
might come.
- Ahasu. No; sleep is a flying butterfly. It is most fair to
look upon, but when I try to grasp it, it eludes me.
Give me my robe and shoes. I will lie no longer.
- Chamb. (Dootingly) My Liege -
- Ahasu. Heard you what I said? My robe and shoes.
- Chamb. (Buttoning up the robe) Shall I not summon your Maj-
esty's physician to mingle a potion that will make
you sleep?
- Ahasu. No. Sleep is distant from my eyes as if I had slept
for hours. (To Harpist) Cease playing. (To Chamber-
lain) Give me my shoes.
- Chamb. (Kneels and puts on shoes)
- Ahasu. (To Fanbearer) Cease fanning. I will rise and walk.
The air will cool my fevered brow. (He walks up and
down the room) Oh. (He sits on the side of the bed)
Why did I not invite the Queen to visit me to-night?
She always soothes me. She might have brought me jew-
elled sleep within her lily hands.

- Chamb. Shall the Queen be summoned now unto the King?
- Ahasu. No, let her sleep. Even though Ahasuerus cannot rest, she shall not be disturbed. (He rises) What is the night?
- Chamb. (Goes to the window and draws curtain) The dawn is peeping in the East, my King. If the King would try to rest -
- Ahasu. No. I cannot rest. The day is almost here. Summon my reader. I would have him read.
- Chamb. (Goes to door) The King would have you read.
- Scribe (off) I serve the King.
- Chamb. What shall he read, my King? The poems of Abu Pharon?
- Ahasu. No.
- Chamb. The stories of Sirdussi?
- Ahasu. No.
- (ENTER SCRIBE)
- Scribe What shall I read, my King?
- Ahasu. My Chronicles.
- Scribe (Taking his place by the Chronicles on the table) Which Chronicle, my King?
- Ahasu. No matter which. Open one at hazard and read the words you find.
- Scribe (Opens the book)
- Ahasu. Stay. (Goes to him) I will choose the volume. (He opens it) Read here where I have placed my finger. What is the word?
- Scribe (He reads) "And Esther showed the King a letter from Mordecai which revealed that Birtan and Teresh, two Officers of the King, had conspired to kill the King by putting poison into his wine. At the instant she spoke, the two Officers presented the poisoned wine to Ahasuerus. He would have drunk it and been killed, but Esther held his hand and prevented it. By the King's command, Teresh and Birtan were made to drink the wine and died instead of him. And by his Majesty's command the name of Mordecai has been written in this book that the King may remember that it was Mordecai who saved his life."
- Ahasu. What honor and virgity hath been done to Mordecai for this?

- Scribe Nothing has been done, my Liege.
- Ahasu. Noting for the man who saved my life? Who is in the outer court?
- Chamb. (Going to the door and opening it) Prince Haman stands without in the Court, my Liege.
- Ahasu. Let him come in.
- Chamb. The King calls for Prince Haman.
- Voice Off The King calls for Prince Haman.
- Haman (Off) I attend the King.
- Chamb. (Opens the door.)
- Haman (Bowling) Before the golden face of Ahasuerus, Haman spreads his hands.
- Ahasu. What shall be done unto the man whom the King desires to honor?
- Haman (Aside) To whom should the King delight to do honor more than to myself?
- Ahasu. Thou dost not answer.
- Haman I was thinking, Sire.
- Ahasu. Tell me what shall be done unto the man whom the King desires to honor?
- Haman For the man whom the King desires to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the King useth to wear and the horse that the King rideth upon and the Crown Royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the King's most noble princes that they may array the man and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city and proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honor."
- Ahasu. (Gazing intently on Haman) Make haste and take the apparel and the horse. Do even as thou sayest to Mordecai.
- Haman Shadow of God, there are many Mordecais in Saushan, to which one should I go?
- Ahasu. Go to Mordecai, the Jew, who sits at the King's gate.
- Haman My lord King, there are many gates and I know not of which gate thou speakest.
- Ahasu. The gate which leads from the garden to the Palace.
- Haman My Liege, this Mordecai is my enemy; the enemy of my

fathers, I would rather give him ten thousand talents of silver than let this honor be done unto him.

Ahasu. Give him the ten thousand talents of silver and still this honor shall not be withheld from him.

Haman. I have ten sons, my liege, let them be slaves unto the King, but let not this honor be done unto him.

Ahasu. Even though thou and thy sons and thy wife shall all be slaves to Hamaneras, still this honor shall not be withheld from him.

Haman. My liege, he is a common man. I will place him over provinces, even over a third day, but let not this honor be done unto him.

Ahasu. Although he be a common man, I will place him over provinces and kingdoms and still this honor shall not be withheld from him.

Haman. My liege, let thy fame and thy fame be spread over the country. Let thy fame and his be spread all over the world. Only let not this honor be done to him.

Ahasu. Mordecai saved me from death. His fame shall be spread all over the world and still this honor shall not be withheld from him.

Haman. Messengers with letters sealed with the King's seal have already been sent out to all the provinces of the King to destroy the people of Mordecai. Shall then this honor be done to him?

Ahasu. I will recall the messengers. I will unseal the letters, but still this honor shall not be withheld from him.

Haman. My liege.

Ahasu. Speak no more. (To Desdemona) Bid them fetch hither the royal robes of purple and fine silk and the golden crown which they brought a country head the day that he was King and order the royal horse I rode on my Coronation Day to be saddled for the man whom the King delighteth to honor.

Chorb. (Salutes the King, Desdemona is obeyed.)

(Exit Desdemona and Chorb.)

Ahasu. (Turns to Haman) How shall it be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor.

(Exit Haman.)

Chorb. (Salutes the King, Desdemona, Haman, and Haman stands in the outer court.)

Ahasu. Let the Queen enter.

(LITTLE ESTHER)

Esther (She is dressed in royal apparel, in fine silk or broided with diamonds and pearls. A golden crown upon her head and golden shoes upon her feet. She makes a low obeisance to the King)

Ahasu. Dawn of the morning. Thou hast awakened with the day.

Esther I could not sleep, my Liege. My spirit is disquieted within me.

Ahasu. As mine has been all night. I could not sleep. Thou art come unbidden to my presence.

(Men are on guard at each door and at the back of the stage. Two of the guards advance toward Esther with their spears as if to kill her)

Ahasu. (Raises his hand.) Hold. The Queen may come and go unbidden in my presence. There is no fear from her. (He holds out his sceptre. Esther approaches and touches the sceptre)

Ahasu. Thou hast touched my sceptre. What hast a petition. What wilt thou, Queen Esther?

Esther (Trembling with the effects of the fast)

Ahasu. Thou'rt pale and trembling. Thou'rt ill.

Esther No, sire, not ill, but joyous that thy golden hands stretched out the golden sceptre to me and saved my life.

Ahasu. Shall I forget that thou didst save mine? Only a little while and the King's memory read from the Chronicles how thou didst save my life, and almost on the reading thou didst come. What is thy request? It shall be given thee even to the half of my Kingdom.

Esther If it please the King, let the King and Haman come this day into the banquet I should prepare for them.

Ahasu. It shall be as thou sayest. Dost hear, Haman, son of Amadai, how the Queen delights to honor thee?

Haman (To the golden face of Esther, I raise my eyes that she may read in them gratitude for the honor she has done me.)

(THE KING'S COUNSELLORS)

Chamb. (Salutes the King)

Ahasu. Quiet.

Chamb. The keepers of the royal apparel stand without.

The Palace Gates as before.

On one side of the stage a high gallows is being erected.

Mordecai and the Jews are all discovered.

Some of the Jews are sitting in attitudes of deep dejection. One or two are looking at the decree and wringing their hands. Most of them are watching the erection of the gallows, the two high poles of which are already in position and the cross beam is just finishing being nailed by men standing on high ladders which lean against the uprights.

Benj. (Who has been watching the erection with fevered interest) It is almost finished.

Asher How grim and dark it looks against the sky.

Abraham Look at the space between the poles. It's like a gaping mouth, hungry for its prey.

Jacob It feeds on human lives.

Benj. (Apprehensively) Who has been condemned to feed it?

Issachar By whose order is it set up here?

Abraham Ask them, Abimelech, son of Gevi.

Abim. You ask, if you want to know.

Reuben I'll ask. For whom do you build the gallows?

Gallows Maker (Coming down ladder) For a man.

Benj. What man?

Gal. Mak. A Dog of a Jew.

Reuben A Jew ordered you to build it?

Gal. Mak. I would not build a gallows for a Jew. Only to hang a Jew on.

Reuben By whose order, then, do you build it?

Gal. Mak. By order of Prince Heman who sits at the King's right hand.

Reuben And a Jew is going to be hanged on it?

Gal. Mak. Yes. So said Prince Heman's chamberlain. A Dog of a Jew who would not feel to Haran.

- Reuben It is for you, Hordecai. Moses said he would hang you on a gallows, and now the gallows is set up.
- Hordecai If it be God's will that Moses should hang me on the gallows, I shall hang. If it be not God's will, I shall not hang. God's will be done.
- Reuben Are you so eager to die?
- Hordecai Not eager, Reuben, but ready. A little sooner, a little later, he will rustle. Let us so live that if it be now, we are ready.
- Isaac I am old, yet I am not ready. My life is sweet, and I would live to the uttermost day I can.
- Reuben Your days are numbered, even as our days are numbered. The thirteenth of Adar: that is the limit of our days. How bitter is the lot which awaits us east of us.
- Hordecai If you will repent towards Me, then the lot will fall on His instead of your.
- Joseph (Coming up to Isaac) How can the lot fall on anyone who is not in his sin? My dream is beside.
- Reuben Yes. With the flock's seal.
- Hordecai No, ye of little faith! The flocks of the sea are full of water. Men and beasts drink at their ease and are refreshed. Out of the blue sky comes a black cloud no bigger than a hand. It grows. It blackens the sun. It overflows the heavens. The rain falls down in torrents. It overflows the brooks. They burst into a flood and overflow both east and west. So it will be with us.
- Reuben So it will be with us, on the thirteenth of Adar.
- Joseph Let him come with us.
- Abraham God performed no miracles in those days.
- Isaac How can you say so?
- Reuben Yes, and hundreds of years.
- Joseph You have destroyed us.
- Isaac It is because you have not been slain.
- Reuben It is because the Lord our God and children are in us.
- Isaac To this day it will be written that Hordecai, the Jew, caused the destruction of the Jews.
- Abraham And thousands of Jews perished. But Reuben has been saved. He has been saved over the law, but we were allowed to live. The law gives and children and we perished, but you, now, you are to be slain.

Now we are to be wiped out as if we had never been
and all because of you.

Simeon Yes, you have destroyed us!

Abim. Mordecai, the Jew, has destroyed the Jews.

Several (Together) Mordecai has destroyed us.

Reuben If you had bent the knee to Haman all would still have
been well with us.

Jacob It is well that Haman should build a gallows to hang
you on.

Reuben It is not Haman who should hang Mordecai. It is the
Jews who should hang him.

Benj. How dare ye turn again him? Are you become like dogs
that bite the hand of him that fed them?

Reuben And it not been for his this decree had never been
proclaimed.

Abraham Haman would have never taken note of us.

Voice Off Make way for Haman! Make way for Haman! Son of Hamed-
ata!

Reuben Upon the speaking of his name, he comes.

Issachar Perchance he comes to hang you on the gallows.

Chorus (Off) Make way for Haman! Make way for Haman! Long
live Haman! Long live the son of Hamadata!

Zippion Shout. Shout, "Long live Haman!" Shout louder than
the Persians that he may see that we yield allegiance
to him. Shout! Hail for Haman!

Jews Long live Haman! Long live Haman!

(A drum beats. Followed by men
in uniform)

(One bears the king's robes over his outstretched arm.
A second bears the purple robe. A third bears the golden
crown upon a cushion. The two others lead in the horse
which is richly caparisoned.)

Haman Where stands Mordecai, the Jew?

Mordecai (advances) I am here.

Haman The king has delivered you into my hands.

All My God have mercy on his soul.

Mordecai What is the king's will with me?

Maan Oh to destroy you, not to save you.

Arshad! To save me!

All (Express great surprise)

Maan Oh, and honor you.

Arshad! Oh! Oh my God!

All (Express increased surprise) Save him! Honor him!
Oh my God!

Arshad Arise from your prostrate and kneel, and put on those
royal robes which the King has commanded me to bring
you.

Arshad! Oh you have come to save me, Maan. Wait till the King
learns of this. He will be angry with you. I will rather return
to the charge which I have, I will go to the gallows
with you this night for me.

Arshad! I will save you. I will not allow you to be hanged I
will go for you.

Arshad! Oh my God!

Simon! What does it mean?

Arshad! The King is mortal.

Arshad! The King, the King, the King, will never be put upon
you, the royal crown upon your head, the royal sword in
your right hand, and that is the royal robes
which the King has commanded.

Arshad! Mortal!

All (Express amazement)

Arshad! Mortal!

All (Express increased amazement)

Arshad! Oh, upon your shoulders, I place the robe of white and
upon it the pur is gold. Upon your head, I place the
crown of gold and in your hand the royal sword, there
is the robe of the King.

(After attending, I and the King returned)

Arshad! Oh my God! I am mortal you are mortal. I placed the
crown upon your head, I placed the sword in your hand, I placed the
robe upon you, the King has commanded me to bring you.

Arshad! Oh my God! I am mortal you are mortal.

Simon! Mortal!

- All The sea shall the King delighteth to honor.
- Mordecai A miracle; a miracle. (Mounts the horse)
- Benj. The ori hath spoken; Mordecai shall not hang.
- Abraham The gallows shall be cheated of its prey.
- Haman (Takes the bridle; stands at the horse's head) Thus shall it be done unto the sea when the King delighteth to honor. (He leads the horse onward)
- All Thus shall it be done unto the sea when the King delighteth to honor.

OFFICIAL.

A room in Hamlet's house as in Act 3. Scene 1.

Before the curtain goes up, there is heard the confused babel of the crowd in the distance.

SYNOPSIS: FERNANDO, Gertrude and Hamlet, the widow of their sons, and Horatio, who is talking conversation with the aid of the instruments and charts.

Fernando. Listen to the shouting.

Gertrude. What do they say?

Fernando. I cannot hear.

Gertrude. Open the window, then we shall hear.

Fernando. (Opens the window) What a crowd.

Gertrude. (Going to the window) The street is thronged with people.

Hamlet. (Going to the window) They are coming this way.

Gertrude. For can you hear what they are saying?

Fernando. I cannot distinguish the words for the shouting.

Hamlet. The man is riding on a horse. It is the King's messenger.

Gertrude. It is accompanied with the royal trappings.

Fernando. I can see its rider. He has the royal crown upon his head.

Gertrude. It must be Masuerus.

Hamlet. No, it is not Masuerus. He has a beard.

Fernando. Listen, I can hear now what they are saying.

Crowd. (Off) Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor.

Gertrude. That must be Hamlet, your father. There is no other the King would delight to honor. He is the foremost prince in all the land; - no prince has the confidence of Masuerus.

Fernando. No, it is not my father. I can not look clearly now. They are passing the gate of our house. Look, he is on four steeds the horse.

Gertrude. What can be the meaning of that?

Hamlet. (Off) Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor.

Zeresh That is your father's voice.

Shamshai He has left the procession.

Parshan. He has entered the gate.

Zeresh (Astonished and alarmed) His head is covered.

Parshan. He looks like one in mourning.

Zeresh What can it mean?

Parshan. What can have happened?

(ENTRER HAMAN)

(He is sad and mournful and his head is covered)

Zeresh Husband.

Parshan. Father!

Zeresh Why dost thou look so angry and so sad? What has befallen thee?

Haman Such misfortune as never I could have dreamed.

Zeresh Misfortune?

Parshan. What?

Haman As thou knowest I went to the King to ask him to give me that Dog of a Jew, Mordecai, that I might hang him on the gallows.

Zeresh Yes?

Parshan. Well?

Haman As I was ushered into the golden presence, Ahasuerus asked me, "What shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honor?" In the instant the thought came to me, "Who is there whom the King should delight to honor so much as me?" So I said let him be decked with the royal apparel and the royal crown and be put on the royal horse and let one of the King's most noble princes array him and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city and proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor."

Zeresh But it was thy voice which proclaimed those words.

Haman (With burning indignation) Aye, it was my voice. As I spoke, Ahasuerus said, "Do it unto Mordecai." I pleaded, I entreated, I besought him not to do this honor to the Jew. In vain. He sent for the royal apparel and the royal crown. He put them in my hands. He bade me execute his orders. You heard me proclaim his glory in the streets. Every time the people

shouted, "Long live Mordecai!" I cursed him in my heart.

Crowd (Off) Long live Mordecai!

Haman Listen! You can hear them shouting now. Curse him! Curse him!

Zeresh Close the window. Shut out the shouting.

Parshan. (Closes the window)

Haman Oh, how I hate him. He blackens all my life, wipes out its joy. Even the Queen's invitation to her banquet pleasures me nothing when I think of Mordecai.

Zeresh Did the Queen invite thee to banquet with her?

Haman Aye, to-day, with Ahasuerus. Only Haman and Ahasuerus.

Shouts Off Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honor.

Haman (Comes to Shamshai) Have you drawn the horoscope for this?

Shamshai I have drawn the horoscope.

Haman What say the stars? (Pause) Why are you silent? Speak. I'm not afraid to hear.

Shamshai If this Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.

Haman I'll not believe it. Go. Get your instruments. Study the stars again to-night and draw another horoscope. I shall not fall before him.

Shamshai There is no mistake, but I will draw another horoscope.

(EXIT SHAMSHAI)

Zeresh What matter whether the horoscope be right or wrong. The stars take time to act. Defeat them now with swiftness. Prevail against Mordecai to-day. Use the happy moment of Esther's banquet to ask of the King the life of Mordecai.

Haman He would not give that life even to me.

Zeresh Then do not ask, but take it. Break into his house when the night comes, drag him out and hang him on the gallows.

Haman What will Ahasuerus say when he hears?

Zeresh What will it matter what he says? Mordecai will be dead. Besides, who is to know that thou hast done it?

We can no arrange that you will never be suspected.

Arden. It can be done if useful.

Arden. He not scared or trembled in thy side. I'll be the in-
blame. The blood that in-crown thy bright sword?

(THEY SING)

Arden. The King's chamberlain stands without.

Arden. Bid him come in.

(THEY SING)

Arden. The Queen's chamberlain is prepared.

Arden. I come.

(THEY SING)
Followed by THE CHORUS

Arden. However thy need. He not sorry or sad, but willing. He
wonder and follows.

Arden. (Singing) I will remember.

Arden. With the religion that must prevail against him. Thou
cannot not throw him into fire, for the executioner
was delivered from it. Thou cannot not kill him
with the sword, for his executioner Isaac was delivered
from it. Thou cannot not strike him in water, for from
the water Moses and his people were saved. Thou cannot
not throw him in a den of lions, for from the lions
Daniel was saved. But from the gallows no Jew for whom
a gallows has been built was ever saved. Thou wilt,
by instead, and go with joy to the banquet of the King.

Arden. Thou art my wonder woman. My executioner of evil spir-
its. My heart is like the gallows. It stands ready
for his death. I go with joy to the banquet of the
Queen.

(THEY SING)

CHORUS.

A marble terrace with openings at the back at which hang silken curtains. The openings give on to a landscape of gardens with the gallows rising grim and dark in the distance. At a golden table decorated with lilies recline Ahasuerus, Esther and Haman on golden couches. The King's chamberlain and the Queen's chamberlain stands behind their respective couches. There is a chamberlain behind Haman's couch and various servants are in attendance. As the curtain goes up, the servants remove the golden plates and dishes and others place golden dishes and plates with fruits of various kinds on the table.

- Esther (To Haman) You do not drink, my lord. (She raises goblet) Let me fill your cup. (She pours wine into it)
- Haman My Queen, you do me too much honor.
- Ahasu. (To Esther) And I'll fill thine. See how the red wine sparkles. Come, let me pledge thee. (He raises the goblet)
- Esther Nay. I cannot drink, my lord.
- Ahasu. Not drink with me? Why?
- Esther The red wine makes me think of the blood of those who are to die in accordance with the proclamation of the King.
- Ahasu. Think not of death, but of life; as I of thee. What is the petition thou art to ask me at thy banquet? Ask and it shall be granted, even to the half of my kingdom.
- Esther Think not it is for playthings, for dresses or for jewels. My heart desires not such. It is filled with greater issues, - issues of life and death, shame and destruction.
- Ahasu. What?
- Esther If thou didst think that my petition would give thee pleasure, thou art mistaken; it will bring thee pain.
- Ahasu. Pain or pleasure, what is thy request? It shall be performed even to the half of my kingdom.
- Esther If I have found favor in thy sight, oh King, and if it please the King, let my life be given at my petition and my people at my request.
- Ahasu. Thy life? Thy people.
- Esther Aye, my liege, for we are sold - I and my people to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish. If we had been sold for bond men and bond women I had held my tongue^{be}

Save me! If not for my sake, for my wife's. She is a woman like myself. Save me and she shall serve thee, wait on thee, be thy slave. Save me and my soul shall be thy slaves as well. (He flings himself on his knees) I'll be thy slave as well. I swear it. My wife, I swear it. (If not for my sake, for mine own, look thy God, heaven, shall be good to thee for thy needs unto me. Save me! Save me! Save me! (He flings himself at Sir Teet and tosses his arms about her waist)

Isther (Outraged) Seize thy hands, murderer of my people! Take thy hands from me!

Hanan (Rising more bravely to her) Save me! Save me!

Isther (Takes his wrists and tries to tear his hands from her as if he were a loathsome beast) Take thy hands from me! Take thy -

(A BELL RINGS.)

Hanan. What? Will you force the queen before us in the palace?

Isther (Starting away from Hanan and rises. Gasping with his breath) The King!

Hanan. Are you so bold to plot to kill the queen and would defend her first?

Hanan (Flings himself at Hanesdras' feet) Spare me! Spare me! Spare me!

Hanan. Arrest him!

(Two servants move forward to arrest him. Cover his face. (They do so) He is no longer worthy to behold my countenance. He shall see the sun no more.

Shouts off Long live Serdecel! Long live Serdecel!

Hanan. What is that noise?

Hanan. It is the procession of Serdecel through the street.

Isther. My uncle?

Hanan. Thy uncle?

Isther. What Hanes sought to kill and for which he had a sentence built to hang him on. (She points to the palace) Dark and grim against the sky, great and hungry for its food.

Hanan. It will not hunger long. I'll feast it with Serdecel's flesh.

Isther. With Serdecel!

Ahasu. Spare me!

Ahasu. Go bring this Mordecai to me.

(The barlain exits)

Ahasu. (Tramples him - if Iron the servants and Pilgrims all well at Ahasuerus's feet! Thou wilt not bring me on the gallows! Spare me!

Ahasu. (Secretly) Wots his up and told his story.

Guards. (Advance to take Ahasu)

Ahasu. Run on the officers.

Ahasu. Spare me!

Ahasu. Bind up his mouth so he cannot speak.

Ahasu. Spare me! Spare me! Spare me!

Guards. (Bind him with a silken cloth)

Shouts
Off. Long live Mordecai!

(Off)

Chorus. The King calls Mordecai.

Mordecai. (Off) I obey the King.

Shouts
Off. Long live Mordecai!
Long live the King!
Long live the King and Mordecai!

Ester. They shout their names together. My uncle and the King.

Shouts
Off. Long live the King and Mordecai!

(MUSIC COMMENCES)
Followed by MORDECAI)

Mordecai. Into Ahasuerus, the King, haste.

Ahasu. Approach.

Ester. My uncle. (She goes to him and embraces him)

Mordecai. My child.

Ahasu. (To the guards) Cover his face. Bind his mouth.

Guards. (Cover Ahasu's face and bind his mouth)

Mordecai. Ahasu, son of Haman.

Ahasu. My mother's name is called Haman, but my name is Mordecai.

- Hevan No! no! Spare me!
- Abasu. Take him and hang him on it.
- Hevan No! No! I am a prince. If I must die, behind me. Let him cut off my head with the King's sword, but spare me not! Spare me not!
- Abasu. You have defiled your princely and shall hang upon the gallows. Take his sword and hang him.
- Hevan (With outstretched hands to the King) Spare me! Spare me!
- Abasu. (Tossing the ring on his finger) As sworn by ring upon his finger. He has defiled his office. Take it off and bring it to me.
- Abas b. (Takes off the ring, bows and presents it to the King)
- Hevan Spare me! Spare me! Spare me!
- (They yug him and drag him off)
- Hordecai So perish all the enemies of Israel.
- Abasu. (To Hordecai) Many moons ago thou didst give me this ring I wear. In return I give thee this and with it the dominion over Hevan's house.
- Hordecai My liege.
- Hevan Let me put it on thy finger. Dost thou remember how ere I said, "whosoever the King, remembering his gift, will give thee another ring to take its place"
- Hordecai I remember.
- Hevan And now the King remembering has given thee another!
- Hordecai Things have better memories than I thought.
- Abasu. (He points the line at Esther) O Esther, art thou happy now?
- Hevan (Flings herself at the King's feet and bursts into tears) O Lord, thou hast ordered Hevan to be hanged, but the mischief he devised thou hast not contrived.
- Abasu. (Holds out his sceptre to her) Fear not and do not kneel to me, but rise. Thou art my queen! I am thy king.
- Hevan (Hiss assisted by Hordecai)
- Abasu. That wouldst thou speak.
- Hevan If it please the King and the King's good friend before the King let it be spoken to reverse the letters

devised by man which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in the King's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?

Abasu. It was a fault of mine, this evil came upon my people. When I asked thee from what nation thou art, thou saiest, "I know not who my father and my mother are."

Hordecai. It was by thy direction, sire, that she spoke thus. Her father and her mother died when she was a little child and it was I who reared her. When the officers took her from me, I feared if it were known she was a Jewish maiden, they would despise her in the house and so I bade her keep her mother's secret.

Abasu. Peoples of men! Because of her, they shall despise her people throughout the Kingdom!

Father. Thou wilt recall the name of Abasu?

Abasu. Nay. That I cannot do. It is against the laws of the Kings and persons. That is needed with the King's grant cannot be recalled. The decree against the Jews must stand.

Father. Then I and all my people must be killed.

Abasu. Nay thou and all thy people shall be saved.

Father. My sire.

Abasu. (Turns to Hordecai) You wear thy ring upon your finger. Give, as it liketh you, in the King's name and seal it with the King's ring and send it out by swift messengers that the Jews may gather themselves together of destiny, to slay all who rise against them and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Hordecai. It shall be done.

Abasu. So do I save thy life and all thy people in return for saving mine.

Father. My lord.

Hordecai. My liege.

Abasu. (To Hordecai) Thou art rebel in the King's realm. The King's crown is on thy head. The King's seal is on thy hand. Thou art the man whom I delight to punish. Thou art my father's second father. Thou shalt be slain as well.

Hordecai. Thou hast turned my mourning into joy. Thou hast taken the scepter from me and closed up in mine hand.

Father. Child, in that is fulfilled the word which said, "He shall take thee out of the womb to give his sign witness."

Ahasu. He shall be seated with princes. (To one berlain) Summon the Nobles. Bid them hither.

(EXIT CHAMBERLAIN)

We will make a feast for Esther greater than any feast Shushan has ever seen. [From every province of the hundred and twenty and seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia which make up the Kingdom of Ahasuerus shall come the Princes and governors, the lieutenants and the deputies to bend the knee before her.]

Esther My Liege, you do me too much honor.

Ahasu. How can I honor thee enough, woman who queens it in my life, many waters cannot quench my love neither can the floods drown it.]

Mordecai Throughout the years that are to be, in every country where the Jews shall dwell the fourteenth of Adar shall be remembered and kept as festival for the casting of the lot and for Ahasuerus who has turned it from sorrow into joy.

Esther And where our people fasted for Esther, they shall feast for Esther, and send portions to one another in memory of Ahasuerus, the King.

Ahasu. And of Esther, Ahasuerus' Queen, and of Mordecai, her uncle.

(ENTER an OFFICER)

Officer My Liege, they have taken Haman to the gallows.

Esther (Shrinking) Bid them draw the curtains.

Ahasu. Draw the curtains that the Queen's eyes may not see him hanged.

(EXIT CHAMBERLAIN)

Chamb. The Princes of Persia.

(ENTER the PRINCES)

Princes Hail to the King!

Ahasu. Greeting and health! Here stands Mordecai the man whom I delight to honor. Your voices, Princes, and your knees. Hail Mordecai!

Princes (Kneeling) Hail Mordecai! Hail Mordecai!

Mordecai (With uplifted arms. Exultedly) I praise thee, oh God, for my redemption.

Princes Hail Mordecai! Hail Mordecai!

CURTAIN.

Ahasu. He shall be reviled with princes. (To chamberlain)
Summon the eunuchs. Bid them hither.

(AFTER THE EUNUCHS)

She will make a feast for Esther greater than any feast
Ahasuerus has ever seen. From every province of the
hundred and twenty and seven provinces from India to
Ethiopia which make up the Kingdom of Ahasuerus shall
come the princes and governors, the lieutenants and
the deputies to bend the knee before her.

Esther. Oh King, you do me too much honor.

Ahasu. How can I honor thee enough, woman, who saves it in my
life. Many waters cannot quench my love neither can the
floods drown it.

Mordecai. For ever, through the ages, shall the Jews throughout
the world remember the fourteenth of Adar and keep it,
not for fasting and for sorrow, but for rejoicing and
for gladness to the glory and the praise of Ahasuerus.

Esther. And where our people fasted for Esther, they shall feast
for Esther, and send portions to one another in memory
of Ahasuerus, the King.

Ahasu. And of Esther, Ahasuerus' Queen, and Mordecai, her uncle.

(AFTER AN OFFICER)

Officer. My King, they have taken Haman to the gallows.

Esther. (Shrilling) Bid them draw the curtains.

Ahasu. Draw the curtains that the Queen's eyes may not see him
hanged.

(AFTER CHAMBERLAIN)

Chamb. The Princes of Persia.

(AFTER THE PRINCES)

Princes. Hail to the King!

Ahasu. Creating and health! Here stands Mordecai, the man
whom I delight to honor. Your voices, Princes, and your
faces. Hail Mordecai!

Princes. (Kneeling) Hail Mordecai! Hail Mordecai!

Mordecai. (With uplifted arms. Exulted.) I praise thee, oh
God, for my redemption.

Princes. Hail Mordecai! Hail Mordecai!

(CURTAINS)



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